THE GHOST TOWNS OF CALIFORNIA

COMPILED FROM

Fortnight

BY

REMI NADEAU

To Robt

From Enid A. Larson

1964

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—by—

REMI NADEAU

Compiled from Fortnight Magazine

The illustration on the cover is a woodcut made by William Keith in 1866 for an advertising poster of the California Stage Company, a part of the Wells Fargo stagecoach system. It is reprinted with the permission of the Wells Fargo Bank & Union Trust Co., San Francisco.

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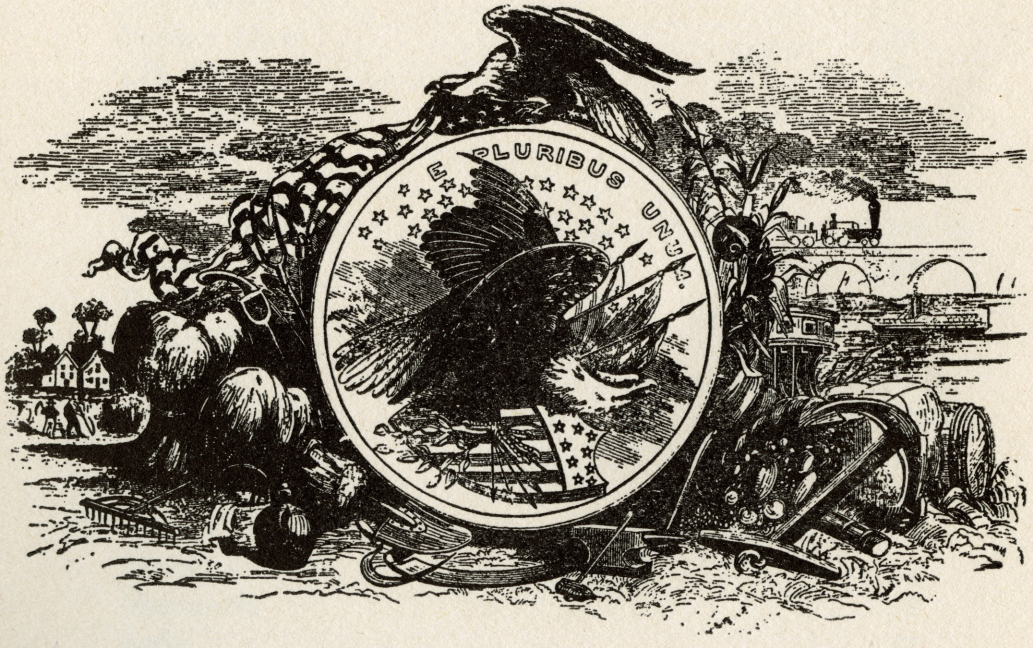

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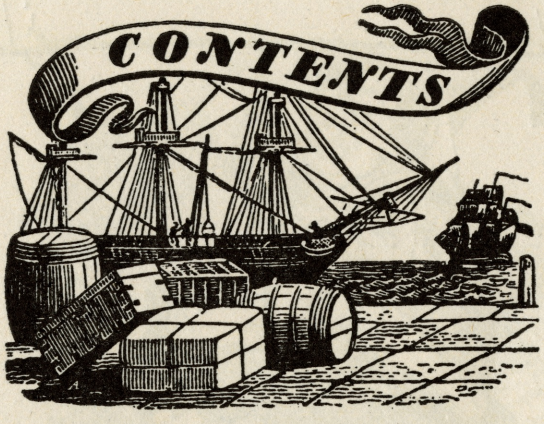

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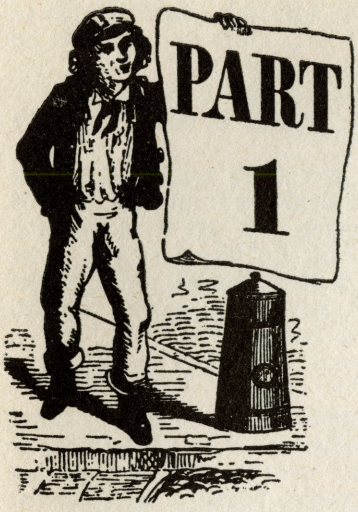
PREFACE

If you want to find the essence of American character, study the people who made the Western mining frontier. For they left the restraints of society behind them and embarked on a quest of greed against the country's toughest natural obstacles. On such a background, the American spirit was painted in caricature—at its best, and its worst.

So this excursion through the Ghost Towns of California is more than a collection of anecdote and story. It is a fragment of Americana which helps to explain the whole.

California's oldest mining camps lie in the Gold Rush country—stretching from Yosemite to the Oregon border. Many of these, such as Columbia and Shasta, are true ghost towns—empty buildings, few inhabitants and no business but the tourist trade. Others, such as Grass Valley and Placerville, are thriving cities today. They are included here because they cannot be separated from any account of California's lusty "Days of Gold."



The NORTHERN MINES

What might have happened had California's mountains contained no gold is one of the great "ifs" of history. But because the gold was there, and because it was discovered at the very moment when California became American territory, the new state gained a powerful momentum which has never ceased.

History's greatest gold rush brought more than population to California. Within a few tumultous years it brought steamboats, railroads, telegraph lines, commerce, finance, agriculture, industry—all the trappings of civilization. How footloose, gold-hungry Americans behaved in this wilderness that had suddenly gone modern is contained in the pages that follow.

Not included here is what the gold rush did to the rest of California. That is another bigger story. Let's leave from the teeming, mushrooming city of San Francisco; take passage on a steamboat up the river to old Sacramento; and board stage for what the early Californias called the Northern Mines.

COLOMA

Where Gold Began

TODAY THE South Fork of the American River looks much as it did in days before James Marshall's world-shaking gold discovery at Sutter's Mill. There are a few rock and brick buildings half hidden by trees in quiet Coloma, a bridge across the river, and a giant statue of Marshall on the hill above. Beyond this, there is little to show for the wild and surging excitement that filled this valley at the beginning of history's greatest gold rush.

In 1948 a second wave of enthusiastic Californians poured into this picturesque site for a dramatic re-enactment of Marshall's discovery. Hollywood actors took the principal parts, and put on a proper spectacle which satisfied the historic pride of a modern California of nearly 10,000,000 people. It was the biggest thing that happened in Coloma in a hundred years.

Technically, Coloma was not the original point of California gold. Small quantities had been found in 1842 at Placerita Canyon, north of Los Angeles. But California's real treasure lay in the central Sierras; not until the United States won California in the Mexican War was the mighty secret laid bare.

The discovery could easily have been made by someone else at another time in a different part of the Sierras. It happened to James Marshall on the South Fork of the American in January 1848 because John A. Sutter needed lumber. A Swiss immigrant, Sutter had reached California in 1839, won a choice land grant from the Mexican governor, and settled down on the site of present-day Sacramento. In a few years his establishment had grown so big that he needed a sawmill to turn out material for fences, flour mills and other buildings. James W. Marshall, an American who had lived near Sutter's Fort since 1845, was among other things a millwright. He discovered a suitable site forty miles to the Northeast in the virgin Sierra foothills and contracted with Sutter to build the mill.

TO WORK! With a party of Indians and Americans (mostly veterans of the Mormon Battalion of Mexican War fame), Marshall began work in September, 1847. The mill was located inside a bend of the river, so that the flow could be diverted to run under the building and turn the water wheel. In January, 1848, it was nearly finished when the fateful moment arrived.

On the afternoon of the 24th, Marshall was inspecting the ditch near its mouth below the mill. Seeing several bright particles in the earth, he stooped over and picked up one—a small flake.

This momentous fragment was hardly impressive. It didn't even look like gold. Thinking it might be free copper, Marshall pounded it between two rocks. It would not break as copper should, but bent under the blows. Marshall had an inkling of the truth.

Sending for a tin plate, the discoverer panned out enough of the metal particles to cover the face of a dime. What he did with this original pinch of gold is a mystery. But just before quitting time he told the men at the mill his secret.

"Boys, I believe I have found a gold mine."

"I reckon not," answered one of them. "No such luck."

No pessimist was ever more wrong. Marshall had the headgate closed tightly next morning, so that the raceway was completely dry. He went over the ground and began picking up pieces of the shiny metal. Placing about half an ounce of it in the dented crown of his hat, he hurried back to the mill.

"Boys, by God, I've found it!"

One of the men picked up a piece and bit it.

"Gold, boys, gold!" he shouted.

Marshall's men dropped their tools and gathered around, handling the metal and testing it by various methods. They swarmed over the ditch and picked up some three ounces, which Marshall later carried off to Sutter's Fort. A few days after, Sutter himself was at the mill. "By Jo!" he exclaimed. "It's rich."

QUIET PLEASE! Sutter asked the men to keep the secret, but a teamster who brought them provisions took some gold back to the Fort. When he tried to buy a bottle of brandy with it at Sam Brannan's store, the truth escaped. Brannan was a Mormon trader with an eye for business. Believing the rest of California should know about this discovery, he was soon running through the streets of San Francisco waving a vial filled with gold. From here the magic call spread down the coast as far as San Diego.

Still no one guessed how great a treasurehouse had been tapped. At first Marshall's men worked on at the mill and dug gold in the millrace after hours. Late in February came the first outsiders—other Sutter employes. Marshal let them work the ditch, but soon the numbers were overwhelming. To head them off, Marshall started telling them of other places up and down the river where they might find gold. So great was the discoverer's reputation that they followed his advice without question. And so rich was California's gold deposit that it rarely failed to bear out Marshall's whimsy.

Thus the real wealth of the Sierras began to dawn on Californians. By May they were stampeding up the Sacramento River by boat, horseback and foot. Soldiers deserted, sailors jumped ship; Monterey and San Francisco were deserted. Said one editor, "The field is left half planted, the house half built, and everything neglected but the manufacture of shovels and pickaxes."

At first they spread along the banks of the South Fork, in and near Coloma. Here, scarcely a stone's throw from the discovery site, the town suddenly blossomed. Shunning the initial tent-and-canvas phase that would mark the birth of other mining towns, Coloma sprang full grown from lumber cut at Sutter's Mill (and sold at $500 a thousand feet). By the summer of 1848 Coloma had about three hundred frame buildings and a big hotel under construction. Along the main street they bore the false fronts and wooden awnings which set the style in mining camps for the next half century.

INFLATION DAYS. The remote boom town also established the tradition of outrageous prices. Almost any commodity—flour, pork, sugar, coffee—sold at the flat rate of a dollar a pound. Shovels and

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picks were at least $50 each, butcher knives between $10 and $25, boots $25 to $150 a pair, wool shirts $50 each. The Sierra Indians were bewildered by the white man's frenzied interest in the yellow metal, and at one point on the South Fork were giving a handful of gold dust for a cotton handkerchief or shirt.

In Coloma one woman took in laundering at a dollar an item. When her husband came back from the mines after four weeks' work, she laughed at his hard-earned pile. In the same time she had earned double the amount washing shirts.

Since coin was scarce in the remote Sierras, gold dust quickly became Coloma's currency — with a pinch of dust supposed to equal one dollar. One South Fork storekeeper insisted on doing the pinching himself; wetting his thumb and forefinger, he would plunge his hand in the miner's sack and come out with from four to eight dollars' worth. But in early '48 gold was so plentiful that the miners passed this off as a huge joke.

Up and down the river banks those first Argonauts ran like children in candyland—stopping here to try a panfull, rushing there at the first shout of a new strike. One Mexican woman found only fifty cents worth in the bottom of her pan; tossing it back in the water, she marched off indignantly to find richer ground. Another arrival leaped from his horse the moment he reached the first camp in the gold country, and within five minutes had found a lump of gold "large enough to make a signet ring."

BURYING TIME. One day a popular miner died on the South Fork, and the boys resolved to give him a proper funeral. The grave was dug in a flat nearby, and the ceremony was performed by a one-time preacher who had given up the Gospel for the call of gold. When he launched into a long prayer some of the boys grew restless and began fingering the dirt from the grave. They found it "lousy with gold." In a moment the ex-preacher sensed the distraction and opened one eye.

"Boys, what's that?" One glimpse was enough. "Gold, by God!"

Solemnly raising his hand, he dismissed the congregation and led the rush for pick and pan. As for the body of the deceased miner, it was later consigned to ground that was more hallowed—and less rich.

By June there were two thousand men in and around Coloma. One of the first arrivals was Isaac Humphrey, who had mined gold in North Georgia, previously the nation's only important gold center. To California he contributed the machine which immediately took the gold rush out of the pick and pan stage — the rocker. Gold-bearing sand and water were poured onto a punctured plate of sheet iron, through which the particles dropped to the bottom. As the machine was rocked, the gold collected behind cleats of wood, while the rest of the sand was carried off by the water. At early Coloma the creak and rattle of these rockers provided a constant tune from dawn to dusk.

It was soon apparent that Marshall's chance discovery was far from the richest. Mountaineers who visited Sutter's Mill remembered similar ground elsewhere and went back to make their own strikes. Near the mouth of the South Fork was born the second gold camp—Mormon Island. By May 1848 its miners were each getting an average of eight ounces ($16 per ounce) every day. Up and down the river new ground was abandoned when it no longer yielded two or three ounces per day. One soldier who had previously earned seven dollars a month took out the equivalent of five years' wages and subsistence in a single week.

Despite the fabulous wealth that was suddenly turned loose in this wild country, crime was almost unknown in 1848. Tools and equipment were left lying about without the slightest fear of robbery. At Mormon Island one mining party piled all its equipment and provisions in an open place, leaving them unguarded and unmolested for days at a time.

The few cases of outlawry were summarily dealt with by traditional miners' justice. In the summer of 1848 one rascal stole a sack of gold; when captured, he refused in spite of threats to tell where it was hidden. The miners gave him thirty lashes, but still he defied them. Exasperated, they tried more subtle torture. He was tied to a tree with his back laid bare to the mosquitoes which abounded on the South Fork in July. After three hours of their attention, he surrendered.

"Untie me," he moaned, "I will tell."

"Tell first," was the miners' demand. And while some of them shooed the insects off his back, others followed his directions and found the gold. Then they washed his back, cut him loose and helped him dress. That was frontier justice.

SECOND WAVE. But while the first year of gold has been called "the Age of Innocence," 1849 was different. With the flood tide of the gold rush came a motley crew of cutthroats and thieves. Miners' courts were improvised to cope with the crime wave, and since there was a scarcity of jails, punishment often included such grim procedures as ear-cropping and branding. Whisky flowed freely in the courtrooms, with the bill customarily paid by the defendant.

By the spring of 1850 the law was moving too slow to suit Coloma's miners. Two accused robbers were languishing in the jail on April 15 when a mob

of over two hundred demanded their surrender. The Sheriff was away and the jailer was impressed enough to open up. Down to the nearest tree went the crowd and the two prisoners, who were hung without delay.

Its appetite whetted, the mob then surged back to the jail and demanded another prisoner whose case was then being tried in court. The jury, which had already retired, received notice from the miners that it had fifteen minutes to bring in a verdict before the prisoner would be hung. But in that fifteen minutes the mob spirit faded. The intimidated jury brought in its "guilty" verdict, the judge laid down a ten-year prison sentence, and the crowd was talked out of its third victim.

But Coloma's hectic days were numbered. She had won her population and excitement on the strength of Marshall's original discovery, not on inherent wealth. Richer localities up and down the Mother Lode were soon drawing the restless gold hunters. In late 1851 a visitor called Coloma "the dullest mining town in the whole country."

By 1870 Coloma—once the home of 10,000 miners—was reduced to two hundred residents. It was a place of quiet serenity, of flower gardens and shaded lanes. The throbbing pulse of a stormier hour returned only once a day—when the Concord stage whirled in and lurched to a stop at the Wells Fargo office.

MEMORY LANE. Today Coloma is quieter still. Among the old buildings are the stone jail with walls three feet thick, another rock building now used as a museum, and two red brick stores. The site of Sutter's Mill is marked by nothing more than a crude cobblestone monument. And the loudest noise is the babbling rush of the South Fork as it rolls past.

As for Marshall, his life paralleled that of his discovery spot. For a year or two he was followed everywhere by gold seekers who imagined he had magic powers in locating gold. They waited outside his cabin and accosted him each morning, demanding that he show them where to dig and cursing him when the ground failed to yield.

Marshall himself might have gained something from his earthshaking discovery if he had not early assumed a belief that California and the nation owed him a debt—in money. Instead of joining wholeheartedly in the gold quest, he spent much of his time complaining at his shabby treatment by an ungrateful commonwealth. Had his discovery been founded on some merit of his own, he might have had a case. But it was simply one of history's great accidents.

AUBURN

Three Story Town

THERE IS A pleasant legend that Auburn was never one of the wild towns of the Mother Lode. Unlike her raucous neighbors, she was at least moderate in her sins.

Perhaps this harmless tale grows out of her sylvan setting. Could this quaint and rustic place, nestled in the tree-shaded Sierra foothills, have been a rendezvous of bad men and a scene of violence? Or maybe it is her innocent name, recalling her English namesake of Goldsmith's lines: "Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain."

Auburn today is California's unique "three story town." At the lower level is the scene of her first gold strike in May, 1848, when hundreds of miners poured in from the discovery site at Sutter's Mill and points South. Known at first as Rich Dry Diggings, the new locality produced as much as $15,000 a day for a lucky few. Of this original site little is left today save some half-hidden foundations.

By 1850 Auburn numbered 1500 persons, and the more permanent gold town mushroomed on its second location a little farther up the hill. Town lots were laid out around a Spanish-style plaza, with one parcel to go to each citizen. One "sooner," an enterprising barkeeper, moved in on one of the choicest lots and started his building. The aroused populace held a mass meeting and sent a rider to the Sutter County seat at Nicolaus for an injunction. By the time he got back the crisis was over. The building was finished and the barkeep was placating everybody with free drinks.

It is this middle location around the plaza that is Auburn's picturesque "Old Town." On its narrow and winding streets stand oldtime buildings of false fronts and wooden canopies. Some are ghosts, some are occupied; only a few go back to the 1850s. But all of them carry the frontier flavor which makes "Old Town" Auburn one of the most colorful of Sierra mining camps.

Less than half a mile higher lies the modern city —as lively and progressive a town as California boasts. As the seat of Placer County, she is the capital of a territory rich in agricultural and mining products. From her highest point a panoramic view of the American River Valley is unsurpassed. Quiet, orderly and busy is the modern town of Auburn. But in her younger days?

NECKTIE PARTY. Auburn's first lynching occurred on Christmas Day, 1850, when one citizen killed another and gave himself up to the sheriff. An outraged mob captured him, tried him by miners' court and hung him to an oak tree handily situated in the middle of town. Despite this grim lesson, another Auburnite committed murder soon after — resulting in another seizure, another rump court, another lynching. But of course, Auburn was a quiet town.

In the spring of 1850 Auburn decided that she ought to be the seat of Sutter County, which then included much of Northern California. So she secured an election on the issue, in rivalry with the existing county seat of Nicolaus. To the polls inside her biggest general store she brought not only Auburnites, but voters from as far away as Coloma, in El Dorado County. With the lure of free "refreshments," she captured a majority larger than the county's population. This so impressed her rivals that next year when the new Placer County was formed, she remained the seat of government with-

out a contest. Auburn was, after all, a quiet and orderly town.

Then in 1855 California's Gold Rush struck the rocks in a financial panic. Surface mining had passed its peak, and for months the lagging gold supply had forced the banks to withdraw money from circulation to meet the needs of business. California was vulnerable to the slightest financial setback. It came in January, 1855, when the St. Louis bank of Page and Bacon Company closed its doors. As soon as the news reached California a run was started on the San Francisco branch. By February 23rd nearly all the banks in the state had locked their doors. Californians were clamoring for their funds. In Auburn's neighboring towns of Nevada City, Coloma, Placerville and Sacramento the crowds collected outside the banks and discussed how they could recover their deposits. But what happened in Auburn? An armed crew forced the bankers to open the safe and pass out the money to the depositors. On the whole, though, Auburn was a quiet town.

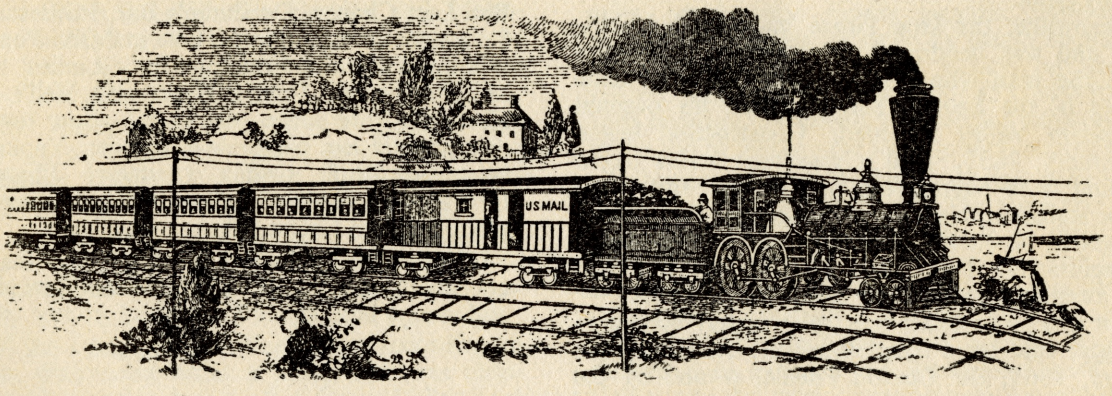
Outlawry came early to Placer County. By April, 1852, the gold country's first important stage holdup occurred a few miles north of Auburn near Illinoistown. Reelfoot Williams and his gang stopped a coach and made off with $7500 from the express box. A posse from Marysville caught up with them on the Yuba River and in a short battle put the Williams gang out of business. Throughout the middle 1850s two bandits ranged the Northern Mines—and made the country around Auburn their general headquarters. One of these was "Rattlesnake Dick" Barter, who won his wicked name not from personal ferocity but because he first settled at Rattlesnake Bar. Dick had been an honest miner until he was twice falsely accused of thefts. Each time he was exonerated. But with his reputation smirched, he changed his name, left Rattlesnake Bar and settled in the northern town of Shasta.

Before long a former neighbor came through camp and, catching sight of Dick, dealt him another foul blow by telling of his suspect character. At this final injustice, Dick broke down and took to the road to fulfil his reputation. One night near Shasta he robbed a lone traveler and vanished with the melodramatic news that he was "Rattlesnake Dick, the Pirate of the Placers."

CAREER MAN. Quickly Dick returned to the Auburn country and took up the highwayman's trade in earnest. For six years he plundered the highroads from Nevada City to Folsom. Many times he was captured and lodged in the local calaboose to await trial, but as many times the slippery outlaw made his escape. One chronicler insists that "he broke out of every jail in Placer and Nevada Counties."

Once Dick and a companion showed themselves on the streets of Nevada City and calmly took seats on the southbound stage. Hearing this news, a deputy sheriff of Placer County decided to carry the burlesque still further by waylaying the stage at Harmon Hill. But the two bandits were unimpressed, and boldly demanded to see the officer's warrant. When he stopped to produce it, they sent a bullet barrage through the stage windows. The Deputy bravely returned the fire with a one-shot derringer. No one was hurt, and before the officer could reload the robbers cooly left the stage and with some rude remarks, bade the bewildered Deputy goodbye.

CLIMAX. In the end, Dick carried his boldness too far. One night in July, 1859, he and a fellow bandit rode openly through the main street of Auburn. The town could not let this insult pass, and a three-man posse caught up with the pair before they had gone a mile. The leader called on them to halt.



"Who are you, and what do you want?" Dick demanded, and ended the brief conversation with a blast of gunfire. One posseman was killed, but the other two fired back. Dick lurched in the saddle, then righted himself and rode off with his comrade. He didn't go far. Next morning his body was found by the roadside and carried back into town on the Auburn stage. This was an unusually exciting moment in a camp which was always quiet and orderly.

A very different type from Rattlesnake Dick was Auburn's second bad man, Tom Bell. A doctor by professsion, Bell tried to make a living in the gold country as a miner and then as a gambler. Failing in these, he methodically decided on armed robbery as the more promising pursuit. Tom Bell was like that—calm, calculating, daring, a sort of intellectual bandit.

The brains he brought to the highwayman's profession were not enough to keep him out of jail after his first escapade in 1855. But he soon broke loose from the state prison and took the road again—this time at the head of a sizeable band of despera-

does. For more than a year Tom Bell terrorized the roads in and around Auburn. At least three highway taverns were his secret hideouts, the proprietors tipping him off on the departures of well-heeled guests.

QUIET END. In August, 1856, Tom Bell heard of a $100,000 gold shipment on the Camptonville stage, and resolved to make holdup history. This was a mistake. His gang got nothing for their pains but a running fight with the guard and passengers. And all the law in Northern California rallied to track him down.

The Placer County Sheriff caught up with the gang at an inn near Auburn, but during the battle Bell got away. With a remnant of his band he left the Northern Mines and hid out near Firebaugh's Ferry, on the San Joaquin River. There he was surprised by a posse, taken without a fight and hung without ceremony. It looked as though life in quiet Auburn might be duller than ever.

Then in May, 1858, six bandits halted the Auburn stage and seized over $21,000 from the Wells Fargo chest. Soon afterwards at Yankee Jim's, Auburn's nearest neighbor, robbers made off with another express box. Just beyond Yankee Jim's near Forest Hill, a squad of six or seven men pulled another holdup early in 1859. The Auburn country was a mighty poor risk for Wells Fargo, but it was painfully quiet.

Meanwhile, the Iron Horse had invaded California and was heading Auburn's way. Theodore Judah, the man who surveyed the Central Pacific crossing of the Sierras, had launched his original Sacramento Valley Railroad. Construction began in February, 1855, And a year later trains began operating from Sacramento to Folsom. But when the line stalled at this point, the eager Auburn people were not to be denied their railroad. They founded the Sacramento, Placer and Nevada line and had trains running into Auburn by October, 1862.

But this Gold Rush railroad was left behind in the bigger race for a transcontinental connection. In January, 1863, the Central Pacific, owned by the Big Four firm of Stanford, Crocker, Huntington and Hopkins, started still another line from Sacramento toward Auburn—and the challenging Sierras. Four months later the rival Placerville and Sacramento Valley line began construction out of Folsom over the well-traveled emigrant route. California's first big railroad race was on.

DEATH BLOW. Auburn came into the drama when Central Pacific rails reached the town in June, 1864. This was a death blow to Auburn's original Sacramento, Placer and Nevada Railroad. But the rival Placerville line bought up the corpse and began ripping up the valuable rails for use on its own route.

At this, both Auburn and the Central Pacific stepped in. First they got an injunction against destroying the track, but the Placerville officials were able to dodge the server. Then a Placer County deputy arrived at the disputed roadbed with a posse and a warrant for the superintendent's arrest. Where could that gentleman be found, he asked.

"He's up in the cabin car ahead," answered a foreman. "Better take all your boys with you—he's an ornery cuss!"

So the deputy and all his men walked into the designated car — and a neat trap. The foreman locked the door and signaled to the locomotive. The train steamed out of Placer County and out of the deputy's jurisdiction.

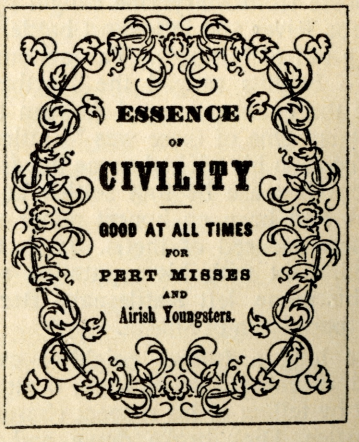
From then on the contest was a grim railroad war. Each side got reinforcements, and guarded its work camps with armed sentries. Prisoners captured by the Central Pacific forces were thrown in the Auburn jail. But the next time a sheriff's posse tried to interfere with the Placerville crews, the railroad was ready with its own warrant—secured from a friendly justice of the peace. The deputies were packed off to another jail, charged with carrying concealed weapons and disturbing the peace!

When one of the victims escaped and rode into Auburn with this news, the town virtually exploded. Local militia, the intrepid Auburn Grays, marched over to the railroad and fell upon the work gang with fixed bayonets. After an almost bloodless skirmish, the railroaders surrendered. The Auburnites marched them triumphantly off to the town jail.

DOLLAR END. In the end it was not Auburn blades but the bankruptcy courts that defeated the Placerville line and sealed a Central Pacific victory. The railroad of the Big Four went on over the mountains to span the continent with iron. And Auburn went along her quiet, uneventful way.

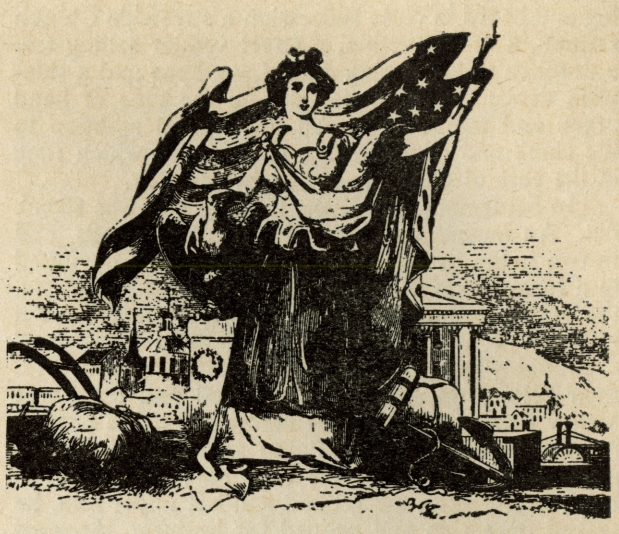
Auburn is, of course, only a part of the Placer County tradition. This is the land of the ridiculous place names—most of them now unmarked sites and all of them monuments to the Forty-niner's sense of humor. Here were Shirt Tail Canyon, You Bet, Last Chance, Deadman's Bar, Rattlesnake Bar, Frytown, Ground Hog's Glory, Milk Punch Bar, Drunkard's Bar, Humbug Bar, Ladies' Canyon, Miller's Defeat, Devil's Basin and Hell's Delight. Here, too, are more substantial ghost towns with only slightly less picturesque names: Yankee Jim's, Michigan Bluff, Colfax (formerly Illinoistown), Georgetown (formerly Growlerburg), Dutch Flat, Gold Run and Forest Hill.

Yes, the rugged spirit of '49 lies over the Auburn country. But it's powerfully quiet and law abiding—and always has been.



GRASS VALLEY

Miner's Mining Town



LEAST GHOSTLY of any town on the Mother Lode is Grass Valley, which is still called the greatest mining city in the Far West. A place named Butte, Montana, may dispute this. But Grass Valley is at least the biggest and busiest gold town in California. Less than 100 years ago it was the eighth largest city in the state—bigger than Los Angeles, San Diego and Oakland.

Unlike most mining camps, Grass Valley never really had a decline and fall. Even in the depression, its streets and hotel lobbies were bustling with mining men. One traveler of 1933 pronounced Grass Valley the one city in the United States where you had to wire ahead for hotel reservations. In a century of mining, the place has turned out upwards of $100 million in gold. Its Empire and Idaho-Maryland mines are still the second and third deepest gold mines (after the Homestake of South Dakota) in the world.

Grass Valley is, moreover, the point which sparked the big shift from placer to quartz mining in California. Situated a scant thirty-three miles north of the discovery site at Coloma, the Grass Valley streams were virtually ignored in the first two Gold Rush years. A handful of men had worked the creeks since 1848, but neither placer mining nor obscurity was to be Grass Valley's lot.

Half the camps in the West were, according to tradition, discovered while a prospector was chasing after his straying burro. But Grass Valley rose before the day of jackass prospectors, and in her case the animal was a cow. One day in October, 1850, a miner named George Knight followed his wayward bossy as far as the pine-covered slope of Gold Hill. There he stubbed his toe on a piece of quartz. In the custom of all true miners, he scrutinized his providential find—and promptly forgot about his cow. Back at his cabin he pounded the rock into dust and panned out a bright showing of gold.

Immediately the original Grass Valley miners hurried up the hillsides. One of them found a small boulder worth $500. That was enough. The big rush to Grass Valley, and to the new business of shaft mining, was on.

Knight's discovery was not the first quartz mine in California. Lode mining, as contrasted to placer mining in the stream beds, had begun a year earlier at Mariposa, in the Southern Mines. But the Grass Valley strike can be called the effective discovery. It started the boom in shaft mining which eventually supplanted the placer workings.

Scarcely four miles away Nevada City, a flourishing placer town, suddenly went quartz mad. From all over the Mother Lode, miners hurried to Grass Valley by the hundreds. Demand for ore-crushing tools was so great that within a week all the hammers and anvils for twenty miles around were lugged into camp. Every pharmacy from Sacramento to San Francisco was relieved of its mortar and pestle. They all went to Grass Valley.

Soon came more elaborate machinery. Mexican miners, who knew about quartz mining, built arrastras—by which the ore was ground by millstones turned with one-mule power. Then came the stamp mills, which were simply gigantic, multi-barreled mortars and pestles operated by steam engine. They were not invented in Grass Valley, but were developed here to a fine point. By 1853, with its placer beds faltering, California was turning wholeheartedly to the job of tapping the underground source of gold.

It was at Grass Valley, too, that mining stock promotion was first perfected. The town was equally at home digging gold with shovels or stock certificates. The stock frenzy grew so uproarious that one newspaper burlesqued the whole business by advertising the "Munchausen Quartz Rock Mining and Crushing Company," with a Board of Directors including P. T. Barnum and Robinson Crusoe. Grass Valley was the original spot where one could apply Mark Twain's definition of a mine: "a hole in the ground owned by a liar."

REAL STUFF. But Grass Valley was never a phoney. In seven years' time Knight's original Gold Hill mine produced $4,000,000. Through the 1850s dozens of other mines were opened, yielding millions more. By 1853 Grass Valley was a city of three thousand, the bustling center of several daily stage lines, a hospitable town with a reputation for good hotels in a region where these were an oddity.

Hardrock mines — requiring capital, machinery and steady payrolls—had given Grass Valley a permanent air in contrast to the boom-and-bust placer towns. It was one of the first cities on the Mother Lode to temper its rough male population with an influx of wives and families. The civilizing effect was remarkable. Numerous churches—several of them still in use—were built in the 1850s. And it was one of the first mining camps to have a legitimate theater, even though it was fitted up in the Alta Saloon. Complete with footlights and orchestra, the "Grass Valley Theater" company played every night to a packed, exuberant house.

Though Grass Valley might have been partly refined, it was never quiet. In the early 1850s, one visitor strolled down the street on a Sunday morn-

ing and heard in close succession a streetside Church sermon, a mule auction, a street vendor selling tea, a drunken sailor singing Auld Lang Syne and a sidewalk dance by two Swiss girls to the tune of hand organ and tambourine. All this was in addition to the clank and clatter of the stamp mills which rang in the ears of Grass Valley night and day.

In September, 1855, the thriving city was struck flat. An incendiarist kindled its wooden walls, and in two hours its entire 300 buildings were devoured in a furious blaze. With roofs crashing about them, the people rushed into the streets and made for the hillsides. It was known as the "million dollar fire" —probably the worst in the Mother Lode. But with their belongings and property wiped out, the Grass Valley people started anew before the ashes cooled. Next morning the Wells Fargo agent rolled a portable shack up against his only surviving asset—a brick vault. With the ground still hot under him, he tacked up a sign and opened for business. Spurred by this example, the town turned to the job of rebuilding; soon a city of brick walls and iron shutters rose from the ruins. Modernized versions of these buildings, dating from 1855, are seen along Grass Valley's streets today.

ACTION! The spirited town could hardly let this disaster pass without trying to catch its author. An innocent but disreputable citizen was seized and accused of the crime. An angry crowd gathered, and one bloodthirsty character demanded an immediate lynching. After all, he argued seriously, Grass Valley couldn't afford to let neighboring Nevada City, which had already had a hanging, run off with all the honors. This precious reasoning, which probably appealed to a certain element, was argued down. The man was set free after a trial.

But while there is no record of a lynching in Grass Valley, the town was far from dull. There's a story, for example, of a late poker game in the bar of the Peckham Hotel. A crowd gathered as the stakes mounted, and one of the onlookers was a rough-looking pioneer known as Old Mississippi. All at once an argument began. The players grabbed for the pot. A free-for-all fight followed, in which Old Mississippi was knocked to the floor. When things quieted down he propped himself on his elbow, exhibited a bloody face, and asked:

"I reckon there's been a row here, boys—hain't there?—is anybody hurt?"

ALONE. With its dander up, Grass Valley was ready for anything. In the wet winter of 1852-53, roads from Sacramento were choked with mud and Grass Valley was almost isolated. Supplies were scarce, and what food there was sold at fantastic prices. So the embittered townsmen acted; they held a Hunger Convention at Beatty's Hotel. Awful maledictions were hurled at the "soulless speculators" in San Francisco who were cornering the food market. "We will," they resolved, "go to San Francisco and obtain the necessary supplies—peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must."

In this ugly mood, 100 men made ready to descend on the Bay City—until the question of financing the expedition came up. With this sobering thought the meeting adjourned, and the boys cooled their wrath until the weather cleared and new supplies arrived. Grass Valley would let San Francisco off, this time.

Rough and refined, primitive and civilized, Grass Valley was a city of violent contrasts which could only have been born of the California Gold Rush. But while it thought it had seen everything, Grass Valley was hardly prepared for the coming of Lola Montez.

The incomparable Lola, Countess of Landsfeldt, would have disrupted things anywhere. Dancer, actress, adventuress—she was the mistress of a king and the toast of mid-Century Europe. Born in Ireland, she had crashed the London stage as an exotic Spanish dancer with the assumed name, Lola Montez. From then on her life was a whirl of sensations, pretense and trouble. Ludwig I of Bavaria became infatuated with her, and bestowing the title of Countess of Landsfeldt, made her his mistress. For a time the fiery Lola was the power behind the throne—and not a particularly evil power, at that.

Then came the revolution of 1848, and while a student mob stormed the palace, Lola appeared in the window drinking champagne. Leaving Bavaria, she settled for a time in Paris. Here she is supposed to have given soirees which included such names as George Sand, Alexander Dumas and Victor Hugo.

BIGAMY. In 1851 she came to America—probably for several reasons. For one, she had picked up two husbands in her travels, and faced a bigamy rap in London. Second, she was now past thirty and her charms were not increasing. Perhaps enthusiastic American audiences would be more appreciative.

New York, Philadelphia and Boston greeted her effusively, but the excitement soon wore thin. Her celebrated Spider Dance, in which she released a skirtful of cork-and-rubber spiders at the climactic moment, naturally aroused interest. But while Lola was vivacious, she was not a brilliant dancer, and her acting was less than inspired. Her attraction lay in her striking beauty—particularly the flowing black hair and flashing eyes.

Still, Lola had been disappointed by her American reception. She craved above all things to be the center of attraction, even if this meant notoriety. She resolved next to go to California, where the rousing miners would surely do her justice. She invaded San Francisco with much fanfare in May, 1853.

But the Bay City was already taking on a sophisticated air. While the audiences went wild, the critics sniffed at Lola's performances. By way of a dramatic exit, she took another husband and went on to Sacramento. Here she was charivareed one night by a raucous mob, which she faced from the balcony with fierce epithets: "cowards, low blackguards, cringing dogs and lazy fellows!" A few days later a local editor slurred her dancing ability, and she challenged him to a duel—either with pistols or with the choice of two pills in a box (one of them deadly poison). But even this did not greatly impress Sacramento.

HOME! All of which explains why Lola, seeking an appreciative audience somewhere, wound up next in Grass Valley. With her husband and her reputation, she descended on Grass Valley in the fall of 1853 and scandalized the good ladies of the town. Settling in a house which is still the most prided landmark of the city, she kept Grass Valley in a state of confusion for nearly two years. Her idiosyncracies were the talk of the town—and of all California. She frequently strolled the streets, dressed in low-cut gowns and smoking a cigar. And she

raised two grizzly bear cubs, which were kept chained in the front yard.

Grass Valley had a large European, and particularly French, population. So Lola also revived her Parisian hobby, the salon. Every evening her parlor was crowded with young blades of the town —holding sprightly conversation, drinking champagne and flirting with Lola. Her husband was obviously in the way, and she got rid of him. Besides, he had killed one of her pet grizzlies for biting him in the leg.

But Lola had her tender side. Among her neighbors was the Crabtree family, and little Lotta Crabtree was permitted to spend time with Lola, learning to sing and dance. It was the beginning of a stage career which was to win the acclaim of California and the nation. Lotta the opposite of Lola in girlish innocence, was to outshine her teacher.

Lola might have got along with Grass Valley, but she could not keep out of the limelight. When a preacher condemned her spider dance, she went around to his house, knocked on the door, went through the whole dance before his astonished eyes. Later the local newspaper offended her, so she horsewhipped the editor.

By 1855 Lola's antics were wearing hard in Grass Valley, and she was off for a new gold rush in Australia. Six years later she died in poverty in New York—an event which sentimental California noted with more generosity than it did her personal appearance.

NEVADA CITY

Gold Metropolis

CALIFORNIANS HAVE always delighted in labeling towns, regardless of size, with the dignified title of "city." Grand-daddy of these honored places—and incidentally one of the most deserving—is Nevada City, in the heart of the Northern Mines. With true California modesty her citizens acknowledge:

That she was the biggest mining camp in California;

That she was named long before the state of Nevada;

That the four miles separating her from the sister city of Grass Valley are the most heavily traveled in the state.

At least two of these claims are amply justified. In her heyday during the middle Fifties, Nevada City was easily the biggest town in the mines. With a population of 10,000 she was outdistanced only by San Francisco and Sacramento.

First prospected by James Marshall in 1848, the place was named Nevada City two years later in honor of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. In 1861 when the territory of Nevada was organized, the townspeople sharply objected on the ground that they had first claim to the name. Congress was unimpressed, and Nevada City has been strenuously explaining her origin ever since.

As to the third claim, such thoroughfares as Wilshire Blvd. and Highway 101 may take issue. Suffice to say that in Gold Rush days, at least, this route bore more traffic than any other four miles in the state. And considering the procession of ox and mule teams, stage coaches, burro trains and cattle herds that raised dust on this road, it was probably as dangerous as any modern highway.

From the first, Nevada City was never quite like her neighbors. Her miners were not absorbed in the usual placer mining, but found richer rewards in the ancient river deposits nearby. These were mined with small shafts known as coyote holes, which became so famous that a main thoroughfare in Nevada City was called Coyote Street. With early-comers reaping as much as $6000 per day, Argonauts flocked in by the thousands. Mining laws were non-existent and claim disputes were rife, but one old-timer had his own solution. A new-comer found him at work one day and opened conversation. The pioneer was noncommittal until he was asked the boundaries of his claim. Straightening up, he pointed to his gun leaning against a tree.

"D'ye see that rifle there, stranger?"

"Yes."

"Well, jist as fur as that rifle carries, up and down this ravine, I claim—and no further."

GUNPOINT LAW. This was not the only case of gunpoint mining law in Nevada City. Eager treasure-hunters were driving a shaft in the main street when a storekeeper called a halt. The men went ahead, answering that there was no law against it.

"Then I'll make a law," concluded the merchant, leveling a revolver. The pertinence of this statute was immediately acknowledged.

In the city's first two years, hardrock mining was a curiosity. One early arrival reported that the men of his camp had a good laugh over the busy efforts of nearby miners, who were actually "digging up the rock for a foot or more down." But after the big quartz discovery at Grass Valley in October, 1850, Nevada City's hardrock ledges took on sudden luster. The frenzy which marked this new rush is shown in one miner's tale of Nevada City's first mining suit. Charles Ferguson and a partner returned from a trip to find two men had jumped their claim. When the interlopers ordered them off, they stood ground and began sinking a shaft. At this the jumpers brought suit and somehow won their case. A sheriff's posse was called in to eject Ferguson and his partner, who were busy washing the ore through

their long tom. Ferguson tried to stall by arguing, but the possemen shut off the water and picked up the long tom.

"As the water ran off," Ferguson later recalled, "I saw the yellow gold glittering in the box. I seized hold of it and carried it off bodily about fifty yards farther, although at any ordinary time it would have taken two men to do it, but the sight that I had seen gave me for the moment superhuman strength—the gold was so thick in the wet mass in the box that it looked like yellow pudding."

Scooping up the richest of it in a tin dish, he sunk it out of sight in a pool of water. He was panning out the rest when one of the jumpers came up and saw what was left. Disappointed, the man soon sold the claim for $100 to a buyer who turned it back to Ferguson. When gold excited such cunning in the most respected men, it was little wonder that violence stalked the Mother Lode.

GALLANTRY WAS BORN. For a mining camp, however, Nevada City was fairly civilized. Beginning in 1851 whole families arrived in town, and henceforth the presence of decent women had a sobering effect. Though miners might be used to the company of saloon girls, they treated a virtuous woman with near reverence. Recalled one Nevada City pioneer:

"Every miner seemed to consider himself her sworn guardian, policeman and protector, and the slightest dishonorable word, action or look of any miner or other person would have been met with a rebuke he would remember so long as he lived. If, perchance, he survived the chastisement."

By 1850 Nevada City consisted of some 250 buildings ("frame houses, dingy old canvas booths and log cabins") extending along the bottom of a ravine. She was hardly a metropolis, but she did have one cultural jewel—a theater. This barnlike building situated on Main Street, was the first playhouse in the Sierras, and one of the most famous on the Lode. Here Edwin Booth trod the boards in the hectic Fifties, and here Richard III was performed for spectators who delighted in "hooting, yelling, whistling and stamping their feet."

STAGE EXPRESS. Isolated as she was, Nevada City early became a great staging center for the Yuba River camps, the Sierra summit and points northeast. By 1851 Nevada City stages ran out of Sacramento several times a day—carrying express at the rate of $2.50 a letter. A traveler of that year describes the confused scene at stage departure time in Sacramento. The entire street was jammed with coaches and horses, prospective passengers and their baggage, and frantic "runners" who were drumming up business for their respective lines.

"All aboard for Nevada City," shouts one. "Who's agoin'? Only three seats—the last chance today for Nevada City—take you there in five hours. Who's there for Nevada City?"

Sighting a man who reveals some indecision, the runner descends on him without mercy.

"Nevada City, sir? This way—just in time!"

Grabbing the man's arm, he hustles him through the crowd and is boosting him into the Nevada City stage when the victim manages to declare that he wants to go to Coloma. Unmoved, the runner holds tight and shouts for one of his fellows.

"Oh Bill! Oh, Bill! Where the devil are you?"

"Hullo!" answers Bill.

"Here's a man for Coloma!"

And runner No. 1 clutches his quarry by the arm until runner No. 2 arrives to claim him. The whole thing, concludes the observer, was ridiculous. "Apparently, if a hundred men wanted to go anywhere, it required a hundred more to dispatch them. There was certainly no danger of anyone being left behind." In fact, the chances were that an innocent passerby would suddenly find himself bound for Nevada City and points north.

This was scarcely the only hazard on roads in the Northern Mines. Nevada City highways, especially that four-mile route between the town and Grass Valley, were the especial haunt of road agents. In May, 1858, the Auburn stage was just outside Nevada City when five bandits stepped into the road. The passengers prepared for a thorough fleecing—all except a Nevada City bank messenger, carrying a sizeable load of gold dust. He drew his pistol, with no other effect than to bring a remonstrance from one of the robbers to "be careful." At this, the unruffled bank man agreed that there was really nothing to fight about, that all the treasure was in a Wells Fargo chest on the next stage. After a cursory search, the outlaws let the first stage go, and robbed stage No. 2 of $21,000. The clever bank agent felt bad about getting off at Wells Fargo's expense, but after all, business was business.

ALIAS JACK WILLIAMS. The arch-bandit of Nevada City did not appear until the mid-Sixties, when a character bearing the alias of Jack Williams invaded the highroads. At first he concentrated on lone travelers. One night he stood on the road from You Bet to Nevada City and stopped no less than six men in a row. Another time he and his gang chased a recalcitrant victim all the way into Grass Valley, where they sent two shots at his disappearing heels.

In May, 1866, they opened business with the express lines. First, the stage from North San Juan was stopped three miles above Nevada City, its two Chinese passengers robbed despite furious protest. But when they came to the Wells Fargo box, the robbers found the treasure stored safely in an inner chest made of chilled iron. The stubborn object could not be broken. The stage clattered on with Wells Fargo triumphant.

But Jack Williams had a one-track mind. A few mornings later his men were on the road again, stopping the north-bound stage at the summit north of Nevada City. This time they had two sledges, a crowbar, a portable blacksmith's kit and a can of giant powder. They would get that gold, they said, or blast the coach into the Yuba River.

While passengers watched, they went grimly to work and on the second explosion, blew open the box. Jack Williams heaved the gold sack over his shoulder, passed a flask of brandy among the passengers as an act of courtesy and made off with his two companions.

Nevada City was broadminded, but this effrontery almost at her gates was unforgivable. A six-man posse headed by the Sheriff of Nevada County swung out of town and pushed into the brush in pursuit. Unaccountably, five of them left the trail while a sixth man pushed on alone. This was Steve Venard, packing a formidable fifteen-shot Henry rifle.

Crossing the South Yuba, he suddenly came face to face with his quarry. Two of them were already aiming at Steve when he opened fire. His first shot

found Jack Williams' heart, the second pierced the head of another, and a few moments later a fourth shot brought down the last bandit. It was a busy day's work for deputy Venard and his Henry rifle. By early afternoon the chest had been returned to Wells Fargo and Nevada City's face had been saved.

Graced as she was with fine women, a theater and other marks of culture, Nevada City was not a particularly rough town. "There were but very few cases tried before Judge Lynch," recalled an early resident, "only three cases of shooting, and those poor shots." She did indulge, however, in the more genteel method of slaughter—dueling.

CALL ME A LIAR? Late in 1851 a sailing man named George Dibble got into an argument with one E. B. Lundy, a Canadian known chiefly as a son of the owner of Lundy's Lane, where a War of 1812 battle was fought. Dibble called Lundy a liar and then challenged him. Lundy was a sure shot —the survivor of several previous duels. He tried to avoid the encounter, and on the day before the meeting shot the wick off a candle in an attempt to dissuade his challenger. But Dibble was intent on getting "satisfaction." For the duel he adopted the dubious strategy of drawing Lundy's fire and then shooting him at leisure. This was a mistake. Lundy's first shot struck home. Dibble walked off the field and died.

There were other duels less tragic. Two rival doctors quarreling in a saloon resorted to arms, fired five shots each while the roomful of men scrambled for cover, satisfied their honor without inflicting a scratch, and celebrated with another drink. A third duel looked completely tragic when one contestant fell covered with blood—until the blood proved to be currant jelly loaded in the two pistols by local pranksters.

Nevada City, dubbed a "laughing camp" by one chronicler, has never taken things too seriously. Unless, of course, you ask whether she was named for the state of Nevada. . . .

DOWNIEVILLE

& the Yuba River Camps

THE BRAWLING, tempestuous Yuba River, with its equally unruly tributaries, hurtles out of the Sierra Nevada and then glides easily into the Feather River at Marysville. Into this remote country, containing some of the most incomparable mountain scenery in California, came a horde of miners a century ago. But they scarcely saw the native beauty; they simply saw the Yuba streams as sources of gold, the mountains as obstacles in the quest.

Gold was first discovered on the Yuba in June, 1848, at Rose's Bar, 18 miles east of Marysville. As eager prospectors worked up the river and its branches, they founded new camps—Bullard's Bar, Foster's Bar, Goodyear's Bar and Downieville. All of these were located at spots where the streams had changed their course enough to reveal sand bars rich with gold. By the early Fifties, miners were so thick along the North Fork that, according to the story, a piece of news could be carried by word of mouth the whole 70 miles from Downieville to Marysville in 15 minutes. The accuracy of the dispatch, by the time it reached its destination, was not guaranteed.

Metropolis of the Yuba mines was, and still is, Downieville. In the fall of 1849, William Downie, a Scotsman with a flair for leadership, headed up the North Fork with a party consisting of an Irishman, an Indian, a Hawaiian and ten Negroes. At the present site of Downieville they struck rich gold, built a log cabin and settled down to wait out the winter.

PATRIOTIC CHRISTMAS. Things went well in this far-off outpost until the Holiday season. A serious question then arose over whether the party should drink its only bottle of brandy on Christmas or on New Year's. For several days the boys argued heatedly and earnestly on this point of etiquette, finally settling on Christmas. On the appointed day they made a punch of brandy, nutmeg and hot water, and then launched the celebration with toasts to sweethearts, wives and country. At the height of the festivities, Downie, who was by then going under the title of Major, decided that the occasion required a formal observance. He climbed to the roof of the cabin with an American flag in one hand and a pistol in the other.

"I made a short speech," the Major recalled, "waved the flag and fired a few shots and finished up by giving three cheers for the American Constitution."

This somewhat unorthodox celebration of the first Christmas on the North Yuba set the tone for the roaring Gold Rush town of Downieville. It specialized in festivities of any kind, particularly the Fourth of July. And in its heyday, it was hardly a rewarding field for temperance workers. Major Downie records that in this cold and rugged country, any miner who abstained was considered either "a crank or a suspicious character." Bottles were opened not by drawing the cork but by the quicker method of breaking off the neck. In earliest days when Downieville had only one saloon, any celebrant who stood a round of drinks for the house paid the flat price of one ounce of gold ($16). If there weren't enough men in the bar to fill out an ounce's worth, someone went out and rounded up neighbors and passers-by.

OVER THE HILL. One of Downieville's first justices of the peace was a saloon-keeper. In 1850, a man was brought before him for stealing a pair of boots. Finding him guilty, the justice ruled that he return the property and, as a fine, stand the drinks for the crowd. The hilarious court then adjourned to the bar and proceeded to make the most of the opportunity. So, after several rounds, did the prisoner. In the midst of the orgy he disappeared, leaving the saloon-keeper-justice to stand the fine.

Downieville could appreciate this kind of joke. One day a greenhorn approached the claim of miner Jack Smith, who immediately dropped his work and began poking in the trunk of a pine tree. Palming a gold nugget, he pretended to pull it out of the bark. The astonished newcomer then began working the bark himself.

"No, you don't!" put in Jack. "This is my tree." The stranger tackled another pine nearby, but without success.

"Maybe you are too near the ground," advised the miner. "Some of them are 'top-reefers,' as we call them here; try about 20 feet higher up."

So the greenhorn shinnied up the tree. At Jack's urging, he kept climbing higher. Finally when the man was well out on a high limb busily searching for gold, Jack could hold himself no longer. Howling with glee, he ran off to tell the boys, while the greenhorn wondered what demon had suddenly seized his new-found friend.

GLIB DEALER. Downieville's greatest hoax was pulled by a store clerk named William Slater, a fast-talking character who had somehow earned the trust of the miners. In 1850, Downieville had neither roads nor express service, and its chief problem was to market its golden treasure. Slater had once remarked that a man who knew where to go in San Francisco could sell gold for $22 an ounce. So when it came time for someone to "go below" with the camp's collective savings, the boys chose William Slater. They were so grateful for this service that when he left with $25,000 in gold dust and nuggets, they generously told him to keep for himself $2 for each ounce.

That was the last Downieville ever saw of William Slater. He passed through San Francisco and was seen at the Isthmus of Panama by a traveler who later turned up in Downieville. Slater, the new arrival reported, had strongly recommended that he come to the North Yuba camp and meet its jolly citizens. They were in no mood to return the compliment.

In that same year, Downieville began to lose its isolation. Sam Langton, who was to become one of the stagecoach kings of the Mother Lode, started a pony express from Marysville to Downieville. Pack trains began operating over the same route, bringing in scarce provisions that sold for outrageous prices in the mountain-bound camp.

But the jagged country still made the Downieville trail a distinct adventure. One traveler wrote thus of a particularly rough section: "At last, after a great deal of scrambling and climbing, my shins barked, my clothes nearly torn off my back, and my eyes half scratched out by the bushes. . . . I considered that I had got over the worst of it." In another spot the precipitous trail was too narrow for man or beast to pass one another. Down-traffic had to cling to the upper bank while the up-traffic passed by.

"The mules," reported the observer, "understood their own rights perfectly well. Those loaded with

cargo kept sturdily to the trail, while the empty mules scrambled up the bank, where they stood still till the others had passed. It not infrequently happened, however, that a loaded mule got crowded off the trail. . . . This was always the last journey the poor mule ever performed."

TRAPESE WALK. Above Downieville, the trail was worse. Along one narrow section there was a sheer 80-foot drop to the rocky stream below. Hikers could only pass at certain places, and then only by holding on to one another. At one spot even this path was broken by a gap of several yards, which the miners had bridged with a thin pine log. As you teetered on this support, with one foot stepping on the cliff itself, you could look down between your legs and see sharp rocks, "strongly suggestive of sudden death."

Despite its alpine location, Downieville had a population of several thousand by 1851. Completely surrounded by mountains, its single street barely found room between the hillside and the river. It boasted a newspaper, a theater, several hotels. Though everything had to be packed in by muleback, the saloons were as elegantly decorated as any on the Mother Lode. There was a notable absence, however, of plate glass mirrors.

Quaint and peaceful-looking, like a "toy village" when seen from afar, the Downieville of the Fifties bore a veneer of refinement. In its restaurants, as one visitor observed, "men in red flannel shirts, with bare arms, spread a napkin over their muddy knees, and studied the bill of fare for half an hour before they could make up their minds what to order for dinner." But its exuberant, rougher side made itself apparent at every opportunity.

HANGING! Downieville's first Independence Day, 1850, was celebrated with a rousing spree which included a knifing and a public horsewhipping. The event of 1851 was marked by another carnival which ended in the worst tragedy of Downieville's history. Late that night, one Joe Cannon reeled his way homeward with several companions, and accidentally fell through the doorway of a house. In this dwelling lived a Spanish-American and his paramour, Juanita, a beautiful woman who was favorably known among the miners. Before the two were aroused, Cannon's companions pulled him outside and the group continued its unsteady way. Next morning Cannon passed by and stopped to apologize. Apparently the more he said the more infuriated the Spanish couple became. Finally Juanita grabbed a knife and plunged it into his side, killing him instantly.

When news of this act spread up and down the river, the angered miners assembled in Downieville, seized the hapless pair, chose a popular court and held a trial. The man was acquitted but Juanita was found guilty and sentenced to be hung. The mob improvised a gallows by the river and performed the deed—only a few hours after the knifing episode.

The news that Downieville had hanged a woman immediately spread throughout California. In general, her citizens were shocked that lynch law had come to this shameful extremity. Popular tribunals had been accepted as a stern necessity in a lawless region; vigilantism was, in fact, the order of the day in 1851. Blame for this final crime was not Downieville's alone, but also that of a California citizenry which had embraced mob justice. The state recoiled at the Juanita incident, and for the next five years, at least, Californians relied more on established legal processes than on "Judge Lynch."

WHOOPEE! By 1855, Downieville resolved to have a quiet Fourth of July. Miss Sarah Pellet, a noted temperance lecturer, was on her way up the Yuba River, and was engaged for the principal oration. In anticipation of this splendid diversion, the boys launched a veritable reform crusade and joined the Sons of Temperance Society by the hundreds. Downieville saloons were all but deserted.

The festive day arrived, and thousands of miners assembled in town. The boys were so anxious to hear Miss Pellet that when another speaker waxed exceedingly long, they fired a volley of pistol shots in the air to shut him up. This in turn led to a duel between the orator and one of his tormentors, with double-barreled shotguns as weapons. The erstwhile speaker was killed, Miss Pellet left town, and Downieville's saloons reaped the result of a fallen crusade.

Today Downieville, snugly nestled in some of the finest alpine scenery in California, is a quiet but delightful reminder of stormier Gold Rush days. Among its neighbors in and near the Yuba watershed are:

SIERRA CITY, located 13 miles further up the North Fork. In this well-preserved town, which fortunately escaped devastating fires, gold miners founded the hilarious secret society to end all secret societies, E. Clampus Vitus.

NORTH BLOOMFIELD, southward in Nevada County. Near this camp, originally called Humbug, are sculptured cliffs carved by hydraulic mining, known as "California's Bryce Canyon." Mining by the used of huge water hoses was a late development in the Mother Lode; it choked California streams with such debris that it was severely restricted by law in 1884.

NORTH SAN JUAN, also located in the hydraulic mining country. Built almost entirely of brick, it is one of the best-preserved gold towns.

ROUGH AND READY, a few miles west of Grass Valley. Named for General Zachary Taylor, it "seceded" from the Union in 1850.

CAMPTONVILLE, between North San Juan and the North Yuba River. Though gold was discovered here in 1852, Camptonville was chiefly important (after 1854) as the head of stage transportation on the route to Downieville, and Camptonville fell back on local hydraulic mining for its commerce.

Feather River

Canyon Country

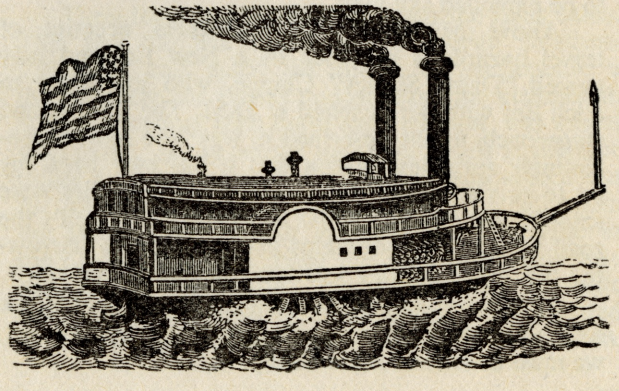
NOWHERE IS THE proverb, "Gold is where you find it," better applied than in the Feather River country. There is no other explanation why thousands of men invaded this remote and rugged region a century ago. To reach their goal they braved raging torrents, precipitous trails, merciless weather. When they arrived they carved precarious townsites between river and canyon walls, and proceeded to lead a life as wild and untamed as their surroundings.

The Feather River discoveries were not completely accidental. Though fully 90 miles north of the original discovery site at Sutter's Mill, the lower Feather mines were opened as early as July, 1848. John Bidwell, the frontiersman who had led the first emigrant train into California in 1841, had a ranch on Chico Creek; a few weeks after Marshall's strike, Bidwell visited the Sutter mill and found the sand bars reminiscent of his Feather River country.

Back he went to the Feather, panning its shores as he traveled. Only a few miles above the present Marysville, he found light gold. By the time he reached the region of the river's three main forks, the gold was so rich that he went no farther. At this spot on the Middle Fork rose Bidwell's Bar, first of the rough and wealthy Feather River camps.

Then in the winter of 1849-'50, one Thomas Stoddard came into the young camp of Downieville with tales of a fabulous Gold Lake, which he had discovered in the Sierra fastnesses. When he had leaned over to drink from its waters, he had seen at its bottom nothing less than boulders of pure gold!

YOWIE! That was enough for the boys of Downieville, and of the whole Northern Mines, for that matter. Could the estimable Stoddard find this Gold Lake again? He thought he could, but everything would have to wait until the spring thaws. By May, 1850, when Stoddard led a stealthy, 25-man party out of Downieville on the momentous quest, it was followed by a thousand exuberant Argonauts.



For days they scrambled over the unbroken country of the upper Feather watershed. When the Gold Lake remained unfound, Stoddard grew hesitant. They had, he said, taken the wrong "divide." His followers were furious.

"If you've deceived us," growled one, "we'll blow the top of your damn'd head off."

At this point the miners held a meeting, and reported to Stoddard that if he did not produce his Gold Lake within 24 hours, he would be strung up to the handiest pine tree. At this sobering promise, Stoddard forgot about Gold Lake and took the first opportunity to decamp. Back to Downieville trudged an angered, sheepish crew. Never again did Stoddard dare show himself in the California mines.

But his Gold Lake proved the first of the breed of lost mine legends which produced real strikes as a by-product. Three Germans straggling back from the Gold Lake stampede cut across into the North Fork of the Feather River. On the east branch of this stream they found shining gold particles lodged in rock crevices. Within four days they are said to have taken out $36,000 worth of pure gold.

When this news reached the camps around Bidwell's Bar, a second rush set in for the upper Feather country. A party of 100 reached the discovery site, found a big gold nugget, washed $285 from a single panful, and decided this was the right spot. By the end of July 1850 several hundred men had arrived to found the well-named camp of Rich Bar. Soon after were discovered the equally-fabulous localities of Smith Bar, Indian Bar and Missouri Bar. This rugged treasure-house, teeming with thousands of gold-hunters, became the northern outpost of the Mother Lode.

Meanwhile, the lower Feather diggings had been booming since Bidwell's first discovery. A few miles west of Bidwell's Bar, Ophir City sprang up in 1850. Later its name was changed to Oroville, the one Feather River camp still thriving today. North of Oroville the Feather enters its craggy, steep-walled canyon, and for this reason the town became as much a transportation center as a mining camp. From Marysville, head of steam navigation on the Feather, stages and mule teams brought passengers and cargo as far as Oroville and Bidwell's Bar. From there, pack trains carried freight 53 miles along the tempestuous North Fork to the Rich Bar diggings.

RUGGED TRAVEL. Just getting to the end of wagon navigation at Bidwell's Bar, however, was a real adventure. As far as Marysville, at the junction of the Feather and Yuba Rivers, travel was civilized enough on board the gilded steamboats. Unless, of course, rival captains took to racing and sent the pressure gauges above the safety limits—at which time crews, boat and passengers were liable to be exploded sky high.

Above Marysville, an eyewitness account of travel hazards is provided by a New England lady named "Dame Shirley" Clappe, who journeyed to Rich Bar with her husband in 1851. The northbound stagecoach, as she described it, was "the most excruciatingly springless wagon that it has ever been my lot to be victimized in . . . " The first 30 miles were smooth and scenic, but 10 miles below Bidwell's the road took to the mountains and ran along a harrowing precipice. Shirley was too petrified to scream.

"It seemed to me," she wrote later, "should the horses deviate a hairbreadth from their usual track, we must be dashed into eternity."

"Wall," said the driver when that stretch had been safely passed, "I guess yer the furst woman that ever rode over that are hill without hollering."

North of Bidwell's, Dame Shirley and her husband proceeded on muleback, twice losing their way before looking down upon the rude camp of Rich Bar. The last five miles into town were so steep and precarious that riders dismounted and led their animals; but despite warnings, the plucky Shirley rode her mule all the way and arrived safely—after falling off only once.

The early Feather River camps were as primitive as the trail. In '51 Oroville was so insignificant that Dame Shirley failed to mention it. At Bidwell's Bar "there was nothing to sleep *in* but a tent,, and nothing to sleep *on* but the ground, and the air was black with the fleas hopping about in every direction . . . " But by the end of 1853 the rich diggings of the lower Feather had made Bidwell's a city of nearly 2,000 —complete with a newspaper, three daily stages and the first suspension bridge in California.

By '56 Oroville had surpassed its neighbor; wrote one citizen: "Coaches are rattling through our streets at all hours of the day and night." Early next year the Gazelle, a bantam-sized stern-wheeler, pushed up the Feather all the way to Oroville. For three months in that high-water year other steamboats arrived, making Oroville the only California mining town ever reached by water.

SHANTY PARADISE. But on the upper river, Rich Bar and its neighbors never got beyond the shanty stage. Dame Shirley described the camp as a single street with about 40 nondescript structures—tents, "plank hovels," log cabins and one unique edifice "formed of pine boughs and covered with old calico shirts." Only two-story building in town was the imposing Empire Hotel, a picturesque union of wood and canvas which Shirley called "just such a piece of carpentering as a child of two years old, gifted with the strength of a man, would produce." But because all materials had to be freighted from Marysville at 40 cents a pound, "this impertinent apology for a house" cost $8,000 to build.

Social life on the upper Feather was even less attractive to a cultured New England woman of the 1850s. As she put it, "there are no newspapers, no churches, lectures, concerts or theaters; no fresh books; no shopping, calling, nor gossiping little tea-drinking; no parties, no balls, no picnics, no tableaux, no daily mail (we have an express once a month), no promenades, no rides or drives; no vegetables but potatoes and onions, no milk, no eggs, no *nothing.*"

As in other Mother Lode camps, the boys accepted this stern existence with exemplary fortitude —at first. In fact, when the first gamblers imported two painted ladies as a proper ornament to the camp (building for them what later became the Empire Hotel), the boys were shocked. Within a few weeks the tainted pair were forced to leave town by public opinion—and this at a time when they were the only females on the upper Feather. Crushed at this ingratitude, the gamblers sold their $8,000 investment to a hotel keeper for a few hundred dollars.

But Rich Bar's honor was not long preserved. The gamblers soon recouped their losses many times over, and their numbers multiplied. Despite seemingly prohibitive freight rates, whisky was packed into the North Fork camps in enormous quantities. Though the miners treated Dame Shirley with near-reverence, she could not help being horrified to

witness constant gambling, carousing, swearing and fighting. The Feather River mines had outgrown their age of innocence.

If anything, Rich Bar was more strenuously intemperate than other Gold Rush camps. A newcomer pulling in at three in the morning found the revelry in full swing at the hotel bar.

"It strikes me," he confessed to the proprietor, "your customers are rather late tonight."

The host was undisturbed.

"It's a little late this morning perhaps for night before last," he conceded, "but for last night, why bless you, it's only just in the shank of the evening!"

MEMORIES. Dame Shirley herself describes a three-week "saturnalia" in nearby Indian Bar, whence she and her husband moved in the fall of '51. In the following winter, life on the far-off Feather began to pall on the restless miners. As the holidays approached they made extensive preparations—consisting chiefly of hauling in frightful quantities of brandy and champagne. They started out on Christmas Eve with an oyster-and-champagne supper and an all-night dance. For the next three weeks Indian Bar was on the warpath. Almost every day a boat-load of celebrants capsized in the river; being too numb to get paniky, none of the victims drowned. Any citizen who withheld from the bacchanal was arrested by a kangaroo court and sentenced to "treat the crowd." Finally the marathon ended from sheer exhaustion—not of the revelers, but of the brandy.

Such excess living on the Feather usually led to violence, and July, 1852, was particularly explosive. On Independence Day the ladies (four in number) and gentlemen of the upper Feather were enjoying an elegant dinner at the hotel when a fight erupted in the barroom below and two men rushed into the dining room with "blood-bespattered shirt bosoms." One lady fainted, and the festivities faltered.

A week later Dame Shirley and several friends went for a quiet walk in the forest and were returning laden with wild flowers when "a perfectly deafening volley of shouts and yells" rose from the camp. It marked the beginning of a battle between Americans and Mexicans which ended in the banishment of six of the latter.

Then a few days afterward Shirley was chatting amiably with two ladies at the door of her cabin when three or four hundred men suddenly rushed by with much shouting to the scene of the latest attempted killing. In all, three weeks in July produced what Shirley detailed as "murders, fearful accidents, bloody deaths, a mob, whippings, a hanging, an attempt at suicide, and a fatal duel." The North Feather in the early '50s was not noted for charm and serenity.

LIVING IT UP. The Feather River camps lived hard and died early. Late in 1852 the fluming companies which had turned the river to work its gravel bed failed to find paying ores. Almost overnight, Rich Bar and its neighbors were abandoned. Downstream, Bidwell's Bar was pronounced "another deserted village" by 1856. Except for the city of Oroville, little is left to mark the once-flourishing Feather River mines. But east of Oroville lie two better preserved ghost towns of the Feather watershed—Forbestown and La Porte. In the north Fork of the Feather, even the scenery itself is marred by man-made dams, powerlines, a highway and a railroad. And though Rich Bar alone is said to have produced $3,000,000, no one has yet found the lake with boulders of gold.

OLD SHASTA

Gateway to Gold

"THE LONGEST ROW of brick buildings in California" — that was the boast of Old Shasta, whose ghost now nestles in the quiet hills six miles west of Redding. Such superlatives are typical of a town whose turbulent history and violent contrasts fire the imagination. Once the biggest settlement between Sacramento and the Oregon border, Shasta now has only a handful of faithful residents. A century ago she was a gold camp and supply center whose trade totaled millions of dollars per year. Today only her shell remains in an empty line of roofless, tree-shaded walls.

Shasta was, first of all, a gold town. Near here the first California gold discovery outside the Mother Lode was made by Major Pierson B. Reading, the state's earliest permanent white settler north of Red Bluff. Just where he found it is in dispute—both Shasta and Trinity Counties claiming the honor. But around July, 1848, at a place called Reading's Bar, he and a crew of Indians began taking out gold at the rate of $832 per day. They had mined some $80,000 when a party of Oregonians passed through; embittered by the Oregon Indian wars, they made things so tough for Reading that he took up his Indian laborers and his $80,000 and departed.

Shasta's own gold discovery came in the spring of 1849, sparking California's second gold rush. Through the summer of '49, Argonauts from Oregon and the Mother Lode poured into this mushrooming camp. Known first as Reading's Springs, it was a tent city of more than 500 persons by October.

Rich as it was, Shasta was the most isolated town in California during 1849. An old mule trail blazed by the Hudson's Bay Company was all that connected it with Sacramento, 188 miles to the south. Pack trains and a few hardy teamsters carried supplies over this route at the stiff charge of $800 to $1000 a ton. At this rate, it looked like a cold and hungry winter for Shasta's pioneers.

Their fears were confirmed when the rains came. This was the wet winter which flooded Northern California and made the streets of Sacramento a thoroughfare for ferries and at least one steamboat. Shasta, dreading both flood and isolation, was seized with panic. Many people sold their goods at sacrifice prices (20 cents a pound for flour) and struck out for the settlements. Soon Shasta was cut off when the swollen Sacramento River halted all traffic at the Colusa crossing. Now the wily merchants who had bought up Shasta's meager supplies at panic prices made the most of the situation. Flour soared to $2.25 per pound, tacks to $1.50 per dozen.

Shasta had been caught in the dizzy economics of California's Gold Rush.

After this experience, Shasta became transportation-conscious. By 1851 a new road was built up the Sacramento Valley, and the first stagecoach rolled into the bustling camp. At the same time, new gold discoveries in the Trinity and Siskiyou mountains had increased the northward traffic. Shasta stood at the gateway to this golden empire, the point where the road ended and the trail began.

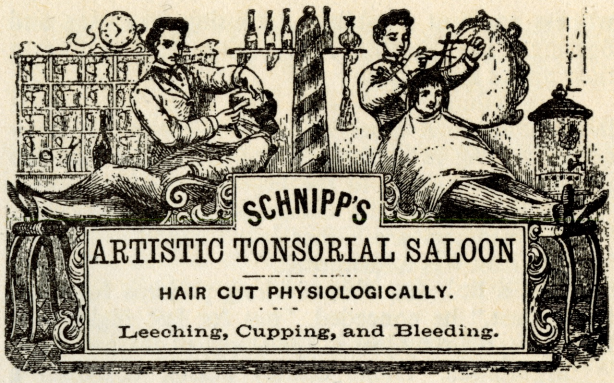
For Californians traveling from the Mother Lode to the new diggings, Shasta became a link in a unique and colorful transportation hookup. From Sacramento you took a sternwheeler up the river to the head of stream navigation at Colusa—or in high water, as far as Red Bluff. Then you took a stage for Shasta, known as "the head of 'Whoa navigation'." From there you rode saddleback over the rocky trail to Weaverville and points northwest. It was a route unhampered by luxury in any form.

Henceforth, Shasta flourished more as a transshipping center than a gold camp. By 1857, four stages from the South and three mule trains from the North raised dust into Shasta every day. Through her greatest days in the middle 1850s, 2000 mules operated out of Shasta, packing more than a hundred tons per week over Trinity and Scott mountains. Together with the horses and mules of the miners, plus the numerous eight and ten-mule teams hauling in supplies from the South, this hoofed traffic turned Shasta's main street into a clanking, snorting bedlam. Crossing the street was hazardous for most citizens and an impossibility for unescorted ladies.

This volume of pack and team traffic made Shasta one of the biggest transport centers in California. The fastest mode of communication was the stagecoach, carrying passengers, mail and express packages. It was a highly specialized vehicle, distinguished from others by the leather thoroughbraces which supported the carriage and took up the shocks of the road for both horses and passengers. The favorite model was the elegant Concord coach, shipped all the way from New Hampshire around Cape Horn to California. Considered the last word in horse transportation, it carried nine passengers inside and from six to eight on top. Rival stages from Colusa to Shasta carried travelers through in just over 12 hours—at the alarming rate of thirteen miles per hour.

While the six-horse stage was built for speed, the eight and ten-mule freight teams specialized in tonnage. Plodding along at three miles an hour, they would cover the Colusa-Shasta route in around eight days. In mountain country the lead pair usually wore a bow of team bells over the collars, as a warning to head-on traffic coming around a blind bend. In contrast to the stage driver's box seat and six reins, the muleskinner rode astride the near wheeler and controlled the team by a single jerkline running through harness rings to the leaders. In her palmiest days, Shasta's streets were jammed with a hundred such teams every day.

At local wholesale houses, goods were unloaded and placed in saddle boxes for the most primitive transportation of all—pack mules. In trains of around 120 mules each, supplies moved on over bumpy, precipitous trails to Weaverville, Scott's Bar, Yreka and the Oregon settlements. As this means of transport had been employed in Mexico for some 300 years, operations were in the hands of hardened Mexican muleteers. Though each animal was



limited to around 300 pounds, no cargo was impossible for the mule trains. Crates of squawking chickens, stamp mill machinery, dismantled pianos, printing presses—all swayed and jostled over Trinity trails to the tramp of hoofs and the Spanish oaths of the muleteers.

Accidents were common by this crude conveyance. Whisky Creek, located just beyond Shasta, got its name when a barrel of whisky fell from its pack and spilled into the stream—causing a sudden rush of thirsty miners to the water's edge.

Over this same route beyond the head of "Whoa navigation," express was carried by pony rider. Competition was so furious between the rival lines of Wells Fargo and Adams & Company that Shasta witnessed many a pony express race.

The most celebrated race began December 28, 1853, when a steamer brought an important message into San Francisco Bay. Since there was no telegraph connection with Portland, Oregon, the two lines sent pony riders hurrying northward with the news. Wells Fargo was leading when the scurrying hoofs passed through Marysville. Below Tehama the Adams messenger flew ahead.

At the Sacramento River crossing, rider Bill Lowden took the saddle for Adams over the last sixty miles to Shasta. He had just finished fording the river when the Wells Fargo man reached the opposite bank. Lowden hurried on, alerting each station with a whistle as he approached. Then the keeper would ride down the road leading a fresh mount at a gallop. Lowden, carrying his 54-lb. saddle bags, would switch horses without touching the ground and spur onward.

Some 35 miles below Shasta, Lowden struck a snag. He whirled up to Prairie House to find the Adams agent in a fist fight with the Wells Fargo keeper, and his relief mount running loose. This didn't slow down Bill Lowden. He caught up with the fresh horse, jumped to the ground, grabbed him by the tail and sprang into the saddle with one leap. Then he pulled the express bags from his old horse and pressed on.

"I lost about one minute here," Lowden later apologized. But the Adams man flew into Shasta so far ahead of his rival that Wells Fargo conceded the rest of the race to Portland. Lowden had changed horses nineteen times and touched the ground only once, bringing the express to Shasta at an average speed of twenty-three miles an hour. Adams agreed to overlook the delay at Prairie House, and paid Bill Lowden $2000 for his ride.

Through this reckless, roaring era, Shasta rode the crest of prosperity. Between 1852 and '57 she numbered several thousand citizens — one of the fifteen biggest cities in California. She boasted seven

hotels, two banks, numerous wholesale houses and still more saloons. In the surrounding placer bars—bearing such picturesque names as Mad Mule Canyon, Salt Pork Ridge, Gambler's Gulch, Piety Hill, Grizzly Gulch and Jackass Flat—gold nuggets were numerous and miners were earning from $16 to $200 a day. From the Trinity and Siskiyou mines, pack trains were bringing in as much as $100,000 worth of gold every week.

In earliest days, Shasta was a town of frame buildings, made of yellow pine lumber lined with cotton cloth. Fire struck this veritable tinder box on June 14, 1853, and in thirty-three minutes the whole business section went up in cinders.

But Shasta in her prime was too tough to burn out. In the next four years a fireproof Shasta rose from the ashes. With twenty-eight new structures, she was claiming the longest row of brick buildings in California. Prosperity returned in full force, and it was Shasta that provided the first shipment of gold received at the San Francisco Mint.

The golden treasure flowing through this thriving camp was not overlooked by California's knights of the road. Among the first of such gentry to arrive were five members of Rattlesnake Dick's gang, who were fascinated by a shipment of $80,000 worth of gold being packed over Trinity Mountain in the summer of '56. Since pack mules over the route were plainly branded, Dick himself was to meet the gang with fresh animals for carrying off the loot.

At an abrupt bend in the trail, the robbers descended on the pack train and quickly overpowered the muleteers, whom they tied to trees. Then they unloaded the gold and hurried off to a secret hiding place.

But Rattlesnake Dick failed to show up with the new mules, and was, in fact, resting in the Auburn jail on a charge of mule stealing. After several days' wait, one of the outlaws grew restless and was killed in a fracas with the leader. The remaining four buried half the gold and lugged the rest across Sacramento Valley to the Mother Lode country. But on the road near Auburn a Wells Fargo posse was waiting for them. In the fight that followed, the leader was killed and the other three captured. Half the loot was recovered, but the other $40,000 hidden on Trinity Mountain stands high in the lore of California's buried treasure.

The failure of this robbery, one of the biggest in the Gold Rush, couldn't scare out other Shasta outlaws. In the late 1860s, a Shasta County barber named John Allen branched out into the horse-trading business—using other people's horses. When a posse caught up with him long enough to deliver a hail of buckshot, one of the men claimed a hit; he said it sounded like shooting a bird on a sheet-iron roof. John Allen got away, but his barbering days were over.

"Sheet-Iron Jack" finally carried his boldness too far when he rode openly into Shasta for an evening's entertainment. In a drunken brawl he shot an opponent and was promptly packed off to jail. Sentenced to two years in San Quentin, he was hustled out of Shasta on the next downstage. But at the outskirts of town, two robbers opened fire on the coach and then retreated into the brush. Infuriated at this competition, Jack leaned out the window and filled the air with epithets.

"It is an unmitigated outrage," he shouted at the vanishing pair, "that a man cannot be permitted to travel over Shasta County territory, especially when he is on his way to work for the interest of the State, without having his life endangered by shots fired by murderous highwaymen."

Jack soon escaped, and in November 1876, he and two companions robbed two Shasta stages and one Yreka stage. This triple blow was Jack's last important escapade. He was caught by the sheriff and sent back to San Quentin.

Yet, long before this final flicker of excitement, Old Shasta's light had dimmed. In 1857, her citizens, anxious to prevent coastal ports from gaining the Weaverville trade, had extended the wagon road into the interior. By 1859, wheeled traffic was rolling to Weaverville in one direction and the Oregon border in another. Shasta kept her trade, but she was no longer the bustling head of "Whoa navigation."

Then, in 1872, Shasta was shunted off the route of travel when the California & Oregon Railroad reached the new town of Redding. Six years later Shasta's gold placers were worked out, and by 1888, the fading city of brick relinquished the county seat to Redding. After that it was a ghost—one of the proudest and stateliest in California. The near-deserted ruins of Shasta are today well preserved as a State Historical Monument—a sort of magnificent tombstone to California's storied past.

WEAVERVILLE

Northwest Outpost

CALIFORNIA HAS mining camps that are better preserved, more active and more ghostly, but none more quaint than Weaverville. Mountainbound in the crown of the Trinity Alps, this remote gold town is quiet, ageless, almost drowsy. But its tree-shaded streets and century-old buildings carry the unmistakable flavor of the roaring Fifties.

Weaverville was in the middle of the second big California gold rush. Gold was discovered on Trinity River and in the Shasta country in '49, on the Klamath River and Trinidad Bay in 1850. By the summer of that year, Argonauts were streaming toward California's northwest corner along two general routes—Sacramento Valley and the Humboldt Coast.

Those who left San Francisco by sea traveled on sailing ships and steamers, braving savage gales, cramped quarters and abominable food. Gold-hunters on the inland trek took steamer to Sacramento or beyond, then journeyed the rest of the way (at least 200 miles) by horseback. Thousands who made the gruelling trip found Trinidad a hoax, the Klamath disappointing and Shasta no bonanza. Sooner or later most of them came to Weaverville, where placer gold could be skimmed off the surface at $15 a day.

The first strike at this remote spot below Trinity

River was made in 1849 by William Weaver, a Mississippi-born frontiersman. Next year the town sprang up bearing his name; by 1852 it was the riotous capital of the Coast Range diggings, with 40 wooden buildings and a population of 1200.

But to mine gold was one thing; to get it marketed and haul in the trappings of civilization was another. Weaverville was the first of the West's inaccessible bonanzas, which had a fabulous treasure in hand but little means of spending it. By 1851, connection with the outside world was improved with construction of a wagon road up the Sacramento Valley as far as Shasta, and development of ports at Humboldt Bay. But all goods still had to be packed by mule train 40 miles from the valley or 100 miles from the coast. With freight rates at forbidding levels, prices were outrageous and luxuries rare at Weaverville.

ROUGH! Life was rugged enough in summer months, but in the hard winter of 1852-3, Weaverville was completely marooned. Snow was so deep that it crushed the roofs of houses. Pack trains arrived so seldom that prices soared to a flat $1.00 a pound for flour, sugar, salt, beans, rice—anything. For a whole week there was nothing to eat in town but barley. Many residents escaped on snowshoes and the rest were thinking about it when the first thaws came.

There was a more formidable danger in the Trinity Alps. Resentful at the white man's invasion of their mountain domain, the Digger Indians raided pack trains and isolated camps, killing horses and sometimes the miners as well. One early resident tells how a stranger stopped at his camp one night, and next morning found nothing left of his mule but the carcass. Soon another newcomer came along, and they warned him about his mule. So he slept with the animal's tether rope tied to his wrist and his pistol within reach. In the morning the rope was undisturbed, but the Indians had gotten the man's mule, his pistol and his blanket.

This running war between whites and Indians came to a climax in May, 1852, when a band of warriors killed the butcher of Weaverville while he was driving a herd of cattle. With the whole Trinity country aroused, a Sheriff's posse trailed the Indians to their village and massacred over a hundred—all but two or three children. This barbarous act was enough to cow the rest of the Trinity Indians. In the fall of '52 the local chief came into Weaverville and in ceremonies attended by at least a thousand miners, signed a peace treaty.

But the backwoods camp was not freed of troubles. Being wealthy, isolated, and short on such civilizing influences as women and churches, Weaverville in the early Fifties was one of the wildest towns in the mines. One citizen of 1852 wrote home that society "is decidedly bad—gambling, drinking and fighting being the amusements of the miners in their leisure hours. Saturday night is usually celebrated by such hideous yells and occasionally a volley from their revolvers, which makes it rather dangerous to be standing around." A few months later he added: "Nothing fatal has taken place since my last letter but there have been some awfully close shaves. One man has been shot through the cravat, one through the hat and one in the arm. The Weaverville Hotel has been sacked and fist fights without number have come off, but as nobody has been killed nothing has been done."

FREE OPERATOR. Law counted for so little that one saloonkeeper openly defied the Trinity County Sheriff. On July 4, 1852, the officer came to take possession of the establishment on a creditor's attachment. The proprietor and his mistress drove him out at gunpoint. Soon the Sheriff was back with a small posse, and while all Weaverville crowded about, went inside. The defending pair raised their revolvers.

"If you shoot you are a dead man," warned the officer.

Next moment a volley shook the building, and the Sheriff was struck in the groin. The crowd pushed outside, while the combatants fought it out.

After 15 or 20 shots the side of the law won a unanimous victory. One citizen drew a stern conclusion on the state of Weaverville society: "Sunday these two persons were killed; yesterday buried; and today almost forgotten."

Weaverville meant to uphold the majesty of the law, even if it took a lynching to do it. In the fall of 1852 an accused murderer was captured and brought into town. The local Judge admitted that the prisoner could not be tried until the next court session three months off. Everybody knew the camp had no jail. The answer to this problem came quick. The man was tried and found quilty by an impromptu miner's court. A second question arose over the time of execution. The majority of the crowd attending voted to wait 10 days, but one group held out for a hanging next morning. Argument grew hot and pistols were drawn. Said one witness: "I thought for some time that half a dozen more lives would be lost in discussing this point." But at last the guns were put away and the 10-day period accepted peacefully. After all, Weaverville had to stand for law and order.

Local Pride. A few months later Weaverville got its jail, and after disastrous fires had made wood give way to brick, the place gained a more permanent look. By June of '53 Weaverville had over 2000 people, 14 stores, four hotels, four gambling houses and 14 barrooms. It was in the mid-Fifties, too, that Weaverville was struck with the spiral staircase craze. Main Street buildings were graced at one time with no less than seven outside spiral stairs, all of them made of iron in local blacksmith shops. Only three remain, but they give Weaverville a picturesque distinction among California mining towns.

High society came to Weaverville as early as 1852. With some 32 "respectable ladies" in the district, the citizens decided to hold a New Year's Eve Ball. The dance drew a crowd of miners who insisted on appearing in "store clothes"—dress coat, white vest, boiled shirt and polished boots. Since there weren't enough formal outfits in Weaverville to go around, they were passed among the miners, who would wear them for an hour or so and then retire from the dance floor and lend them to another. "It went off first-rate," reported one celebrant. "I was afraid there would be a row of some kind but every one behaved themselves with propriety. . . ."

After that beginning, Weaverville was a social-minded camp. The following Fourth of July it held not one ball, but two. Such events were so rare in the California mines that four ladies of Shasta rode 40 miles on muleback over rough mountain trails to attend.

By 1856 Weaverville was becoming positively refined. It had a theater, a schoolhouse, church, Sunday school and naturally enough—a dancing class. Trained for such intricate steps as the waltz and the schottische, the miners were ready for even greater social triumphs. The next Fourth they held a magnificent ball at Chauncey's Hotel two miles out of town, danced till sunrise and horseraced back to Weaverville. Social notes from an eye-witness:

"Miss Burbank's horse fell going about 2.40, through an old bed of a stream. She went about 15 feet over his head and landed in a soft muddy place, with all her ball fixin's on. Some gents along with her washed off the thickest of the mud and got her in a buggy. Mrs Todd broke down the seat in a wagon and created considerable confusion as she weighs about 200. . . . Taking it all together it was the greatest affair of its kind that has ever come off here. . . ."

But Weaverville could still have its stormy moments. Most famous of these was provided by its large population of Chinese, who were a familiar part of the California Gold Rush scene. With their patient methods they could make a living at gold mining in ground abandoned or worked over by Americans. In its heyday Weaverville contained several hundred Chinese, who generally kept to themselves and settled their own quarrels. According to some accounts they were divided into two "companies"—one from Canton and the other from Hongkong. In the summer of 1854 they fell into an argument and made ready for war. The town blacksmiths were rushed with orders for spears, pikes and tridents. One munitions maker, obviously an opportunist, agreed to make 100 spears for the Canton Party at $1.50 each; within an hour the Hongkongs won him over with an order for 200 spears; an hour later the Cantons secured his services with a bid of 300 spears at $2.50 each.

But no matter; all the blacksmiths and merchants in town were busy. For the next few days both sides were marching, drilling and parading the streets with tin helmets, iron shield, home-made bombs, pikes and squirt guns containing some foul liquid. With morbid anticipation the miners made no attempt to prevent a clash, but awaited it as a choice diversion.

War! Everything seemed to happen in Weaverville on July 4, and the Chinese war was no exception. On the appointed day the belligerents took up their positions in a field one mile from town. The Sheriff arrived to stop the battle, but 2000 American spectators interfered. The Chinese, they said, had gone to a lot of trouble for this event, and many of the Americans had come a long way to see it. Wouldn't it be a shame for the Sheriff to stop it all now? So the peace officer stepped aside.

Meanwhile, the two war parties had been running through maneuvers with much beating of gongs and tooting of horns. Said one observer, "Now they would halt, with their poles upright looking like a forest of trees. Then lowering the points of their spears, with awful yells, they would run two or three hundred yards. Then stop, the front rank dropping on one knee, forming a perfect rampart of spears and shields."

Finally, the leader of the Hongkongs rolled up his pantlegs, struck his sword on his shield and shouted a signal. The army, some 150-strong, charged across a gulley and into the blades of the enemy. The Cantons fell back. Then their reserves came up on the left flank. But by a prearranged plot with the Hongkongs, some of the Americans drove them back. The Canton army then fled, leaving the Hongkongs in possession of the field.

By this time the festive spirit of the occasion had turned sour. Eight Chinese and one American lay dead, with six to eight wounded. Most Americans were disgusted that some of their own people had taken sides in the battle. Thus ended Weaverville's Chinese War, one of the curiosa of the Gold Rush. "We thought that the whole thing would be

a farce," summarized one American, "but their coolness and courage surprised us and the play turned into a tragedy at the close."

Until the late Fifties, Weaverville wavered between recklessness and refinement. Even its "respectable ladies" and its fancy balls could not dull the rough edge of the mining camp. When the latest song hit was sent to one resident from his sister in New England, he wrote back: "I received the music all right but there is only one piano in town and that is unfortunately in a house of ill-fame."

By 1858 Weaverville shed its isolation when a wagon road was built from Shasta to replace the rugged mule trail. For several decades it continued to thrive as a gold camp. Today, with its iron-shuttered buildings, spiral stairs, old-time courthouse and historical museum, Weaverville has lost its rough edge but not its atmosphere.

SISKIYOU

& the North Border Camps

TODAY, CALIFORNIA'S scenic Klamath country is a picture of peace and serenity. But then, things have changed in a hundred years. When the land was new in the gold-struck 1850s, life was as raw and rugged as the Klamath Mountains—and a lot less permanent. Indian attacks, stage robberies, shootings—these were the hazards of travel and residence in old-time Siskiyou County.

This far north region got a slow start—for mining country. Argonaut wagon trains came over the Siskiyous and along the base of towering Mount Shasta as early as June, 1849—but found no gold. By 1850 gold-hunters trudging overland from Oregon were testing the Klamath River bars. California prospectors invaded the Klamath tributaries—Salmon and Scott Rivers. Here sprang the wild and isolated camps of Scott's Bar, Happy Camp, Hamburg, Sawyer's Bar. They drew miners by the hundreds, but the biggest strike was yet to come.

On Shasta River, a few miles south of the Klamath, prospectors found gold as early as July, 1850. But it remained for a band of Oregonians, heading for the Scott River mines, to make the big discovery in March, 1851. After camping on what later became Yreka Flats, they pulled stakes one morning and moved on. Abraham Thompson let his mules graze by the trail, and as one of them pulled up a tuft of grass, noticed yellow flecks in the roots. Quickly he panned out some of the dirt—and at sight of the coarse gold he ran after his friends.

"Come back! I've struck it!"

That was the beginning of the big rush to the north border. Within six weeks 2000 men had left the Mother Lode and flocked into Thompson's Dry Diggings. By late spring the new town of log cabins and brush wickiups got a second name. If you walked a short distance out of camp you could see far to the South the magnificent peak that dominates the Siskiyou country — Mount Shasta, or as the miners called it, Shasta Butte. So the town became Shasta Butte City.

But this sounded too much like that of the earlier camp, Shasta City, 100 miles southward. One day some of the boys were sitting about trying to think of a new name. The county clerk had an inspiration, and approached a nearby group of Indians.

"What do you call the mountain?" he inquired, pointing to Shasta.

"I-e-ka—'the white'," they answered.

SLANG TOUCH. By the time a citizen rode south to record the new name at the state capital, it had been corrupted to Yreka. So the boys succeeded in keeping a name for Shasta, or so they thought, and they would pounce on anyone who dared suggest that Yreka sounded too much like Eureka, the port city on the northern coast.

Yreka soon became the metropolis of the far north country. By 1852 it had an estimated 5000 population, some fifty store buildings and a bursting energy. By '54, when the budding poet, Joaquin Miller, arrived in California from Oregon, he found it thus:

"A tide of people poured up and down, and across from other streets, as strong as if in New York. . . . Not a woman in sight, not a child, not a boy. . . . The wind pitched down from the white-covered mountains, cold and keen, and whistled above the crowds along the street. . . . Brick houses on either hand, two and three stories high."

If Yreka was bustling, it was also rough. Its citizens wore guns as a matter of course. First building in town was a saloon, with a bar duly sandbagged and bullet-proofed for protection of the bartender. Behind another bar, Joaquin Miller noticed a revolver "cocked and capped" for instant action.

Legal process in such a country was less than formal. One of the remarkable judges of California's gold days was Yreka's George C. Vail, whose decisions were wholly unencumbered by legal training. But what he lacked in law, he made up in audacity and common sense.

A young Oregonian came into his court and charged that an employer was skipping town without paying him for an entire winter's work. Vail promptly left the bench and took two constables in pursuit. On the road from Yreka they overtook the accused and hauled him back to court. He acknowledged the debt, but said he had no money. This did not disturb Judge Vail.

"Constable," he ordered cooly, "take that man and stand him on his head; then shake him well, and listen if you can hear anything drop."

Next moment the defendant was tried and found guilty. From his pockets fell a bag of gold dust in the amount of $2000. Out of this came the plaintiff's pay and an ounce of gold each for the two constables and judge—as "court costs." Then the culprit, having been placed right side up, was freed.

CULTURE & CHRISTIANITY. By 1854 Yreka's lawlessness was wearing hard on a small core of civilized residents. The few ladies in town decided to build a church—feeling, as one of them put it, "an imperative need of some influence other than the saloon and gaming table." Such a cause, pushed by persuasive femininity, captured the enthusiasm of the boys. Gallantly they contributed a fortune in gold dust, and prepared for quieter days. A Union Church, joined by Protestant and Catholic alike, was raised on the Plaza. When it was almost finished, the ladies held a dedication supper inside. Just as the Sheriff, in the place of honor, stood ready to slice the viands, the good assemblage was startled by a volley of shots. A man flung open the door.

"Sheriff, come quick! The Greenhorns are storming the jail!"

Now the Greenhorns were the miners of nearby Greenhorn Creek, who had clashed with the Yreka Flats Ditch Association over water rights. One of them had been jailed for cutting the Yreka ditch, and they were now in the process of liberating him —forcibly. The Sheriff and every man in the church dashed outside and joined battle.

"Many ladies ran out in excitement and curiosity," recorded one churchwoman, "but hearing a fusillade of shooting, mingled with the uproar of angry voices, speedily retreated."

Some minutes later the churchmen trudged back to the supper table. The Greenhorns had succeeded in rescuing their man. Casualties included one dead and several wounded. Apologies to the ladies were made and accepted. There was a general feeling that the Gospel was arriving none too soon.

Early-day Yreka might be crude, but it was not all bad. Up and down the nearby creeks, the honest miner plied his trade with rocker and long tom, living a simple, outdoor life. Joaquin Miller, on an early morning stroll in the Yreka diggings, leaves this impression:

"Now the smoke from the low chimneys of the log cabins began to rise and curl through the cool, clear air on every hand, and the miners to come out at the low doors; great hairy, bearded, six-foot giants, hatless and half-dressed. They stretched themselves in the sweet, frosty air, shouting to each other in a sort of savage banter, washed their hands and faces in the gold pans that stood by the door, and then entered their cabins, to partake of the eternal beans and bacon and coffee, and coffee and bacon and beans."

DREARY DIET. Young Joaquin Miller had special reason to note the dreary diet of California miners. His first job in California was that of cook for a party of Oregon prospectors on Klamath River. Apparently the miners weren't fully satisfied with his talents. Once a newcomer joined them, and during his first night in camp he got up and started rifling the sluice box of its gold. The men caught him in the act, tied him to a tree and went back to sleep with the intention of hanging him next day. But when they found out that he knew the whereabouts of a good cook, they promptly reinstated him as a member in good standing.

If the Yreka country was primitive, its transportation was still worse. For the first few years, travel to Yreka was by horseback and mule train from Shasta, 100 miles southward, although Oregonians managed to get a few wagons over the Siskiyou Mountains. The trail was rough and precipitous, with such other inconveniences as bandits and hostile Indians.

In fact, Shasta Valley holds distinction as the scene of the first organized road agentry in California. By October, 1851, one Charlie Smith was leading an outlaw gang numbering as high as 30 men. On the 23rd four robbers disguised as Indians surprised two miners a few miles south of Yreka. But the intended victims opened fire, and were reinforced by another party of travelers who drove the bandits off.

Then in 1856 a stage road was pushed through to Yreka by the roundabout Pit River route. The Sacramento *Union* called the route "a terrible rough one," and one traveler complained of miserable lodging houses where arrivals waded "through mud and slush to find a dirty wash basin, dirtier towels and 'yaller' soap, or no soap at all." And for meals the tired passengers got "half-cooked beans, heavy bread, stale butter, and bread pudding."

WARPATH. Meanwhile, the Pit River Indians were not agreeable to the white man's invasion. Travel along the route was constantly interrupted by their depredations. By late August, 1856, they ventured to make the first Indian attack on a California stagecoach. Driver Jared Robbins, alone on the downstage south of Yreka, was a few miles below the Pit River ferry when a war party jumped his stage. He was hit in the first volley of arrows, but whipping up the team, he flew onward for the next station—seventeen miles away.

Down that rutted and winding road careened stage and team, with Indian riders swarming round like enraged hornets. Arrows struck both Robbins and his horses, but it was the bumpy road which brought down the first casualty. Jolted and pounded unmercifully, the coach broke down and overturned in the middle of an open meadow. By the time the Indians reached the wreck, Robbins was on his way again—riding one horse and leading the rest. More pounding pursuit and more savage arrows, but at the end of that seventeen-mile race Robbins flew into the safety of the stage station—wounded but very much alive.

After that the Pit River route was left to daredevils and the Indians. In 1857, work was begun on a new stage road north from Shasta City in the Coast Range. By 1860 the new road was completed through Scott River to Yreka. Travelers could board stage for the Siskiyou country with a fair expectation of arriving with their scalps.

THE HIGHWAYMEN. But the new route was not neglected by California's masked gentry. By the middle 1870s, with the Iron Horse supplanting the stagecoach on the state's main arteries, highwaymen turned to the long, rugged and rewarding road between Shasta City and Jacksonville, Oregon. On this route in 1876, robbers stopped no less than five stages, one of them carrying the Western transportation king and owner of the line, Ben Holliday. Of his twenty-eight robberies, arch-bandit Black Bart honored the Yreka stages seven times. When Presi-

dent Rutherford B. Hayes and General William T. Sherman passed through Yreka in 1880, they received a proper welcome, but the crowd was meager. Most of the male population was off in the Siskiyous chasing stage robbers.

Still it was the unrelenting Indian who was the main danger for early-day Siskiyou settlers. The discoverers of Scott's Bar were driven out by Klamath Indians in 1850. By 1852 the Shastas, Modocs and Pit River Indians were all on the warpath. When the Modocs massacred an emigrant train, the whites organized a volunteer company and combed the north country. Failing to flush the quarry, they resorted to treachery. The Indians were invited to peace talks, and deliberately murdered.

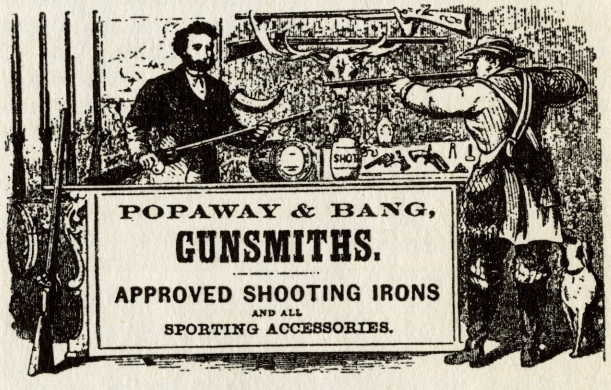
WEAKENED. This foul deed crippled Modoc strength, though Indian raids continued throughout the '50s. In 1873 the final chapter of the pathetic story was written when U. S. troops were called upon to put the remnant of the Modocs back on their reservation in southern Oregon. Led by the audacious Captain Jack, the Indians entrenched themselves in California's impregnable Lava Beds and held off as many as a thousand soldiers for three months. Then they played the white man's game and slew the opposing general in a truce conference. In the end Captain Jack was finally caught through the perfidy of some of his own warriors, and hanged according to white man's law.

Peace had come to the Siskiyou country, but the era of the gold placers had already seen its halcyon days. In 1863 a visitor to Scott's Bar noted that "over half the houses are empty, four-fifths of the population gone, business has decayed, and the town is dilapidated." It was the same story at Hamburg, Happy Camp, Sawyer's Bar, Greenhorn Bar and Humbug Creek.

But Yreka, standing on the path of empire between California and Oregon, refused to die. As the placers faded, Shasta Valley people turned to farming and ranching. When the railroad invaded Siskiyou in 1887 it shunned Yreka by eight miles, but her citizens countered by spanning the gap with their own line, the Yreka Western Railroad. The modern Highway 99 passes through the city to assure its commercial position; today Yreka is one of the few California mining towns to survive on something else than gold. As for lofty old I-e-ka, she still looks down from the clouds with the same benign tolerance that she showed to the Forty-niners.

SUSANVILLE

California's Dixie



YOU DON'T HEAR much about mining in Susanville nowadays. Lumbering, stockraising and vacationing are the chief industries in this out-of-the-way city on the eastern brow of the Sierras. And, as for history, that's pretty well covered by Susanville's record as the arch-rebel of California. She was the capital of not one but two distinct territories which seceded from California, Utah Territory, Nevada Territory and all outside authority in general.

Nevertheless, Susanville qualifies as a California mining town. Gold was first discovered in Honey Lake Valley in 1954, and miners streamed in from the Feather River diggings. And so Susanville became the northernmost outpost of the Sierra mining camps.

But, at this early date, the town was linked commercially with centers to the West, not to the South. A year earlier Susanville had been born out of the business ambitions of Shasta, a mining and transshipping center over a hundred miles westward. With California's Gold Rush in full swing, the merchants of Shasta noted the easier crossings of the Northern Sierras and decided to bid for the emigrant trade. So when a prospector named Noble discovered a new route which led through the present Susanville, they put up the money for a survey and had a wagon road in operation by 1853.

THE EASY LONG ROUTE. The Noble's Pass route was hardly a short-cut. It took the Argonauts up through Honey Lake Valley all the way to the modern town of Bieber, near the Modoc County line. Then it cut back to the Southwest and passed Mount Lassen to reach Shasta City. But since it was less hair-raising than the crossings farther South, it was soon carrying much of the traffic into Sacramento Valley.

In fact, it was so well traveled that one Isaac N. Roop left Shasta to start a hotel in the Honey Lake country in the spring of 1853. His log cabin, the first building in Susanville, still stands on the east side of Weatherlow Street, serving now as a California Museum. But, in a stormier day, it was the capitol of independent territories taking in part of California and half of Nevada. And in one hectic moment when Susanville's doughty citizens defended their secession with rifles, it was known as Fort Defiance. The settlement itself labored under the unimaginative name of Rooptown until 1858, when it was renamed Susanville in honor of Roop's daughter, Susan Engle Roop.

Susanville's most famous citizen was not her founder, but Peter Lassen—explorer, guide, trapper and all-around mountain man. Born in Denmark, Lassen came to America at the age of twenty-nine. In 1839 he went West to Oregon, came to California a year later, and from then on was a leading pathfinder in the Northern Sierras. It was his prospecting party which first found gold near Honey Lake, starting Susanville's first boom.

WOOD FRONTIER. In those days the Honey Lake country was a real frontier. Most of the isolated cabins were made of logs, with shake roofs and rock fireplaces. Even furniture was made of logs split with an axe, since all merchandise was brought in by pack train. As a result commodities—tools for mining, implements for farming—were scarce, and prices high. A supply of bullets and seed ensured one's food supply, for game was abundant and the land fertile.

Travel and transportation were almost always by foot or horseback. Regular mail delivery was unknown. If one expected a letter, he had to wait until someone went over to Quincy, the nearest Mother Lode mining camp. Everyone making the trip was expected to bring back Honey Lake Valley mail, and sometimes to read it to the recipient.

SHOOTING IRONS. With law and order a hundred miles away, no one set foot out of the house without a six-shooter, and there was a general feeling that two guns were better. Of course, if you were making any kind of a trip you also added a rifle and a Bowie knife. Needless to say, shooting scrapes were frequent. Some of the disputes arose over the ownership of a horse. There were many white horse thieves, but it was often possible to avert suspicion by blaming the Indians, who were known to be interested in horses.

Exposed on all sides to Indian attack, Honey Lake Valley was in a dangerous position. From her earliest days, Susanville suffered raids by the Pit River Indians, who usually contented themselves with driving off most of the loose horses and cattle.

POTATO WAR. Then from the south end of the valley came the Washoes of Nevada Territory, foraging for vegetables and whatever else they could confiscate. One day in 1857 some 150 Indians dug up William Morehead's potato patch and made off with the entire crop. This was too much for Morehead, who rounded up about sixty friends and gave hot pursuit. They caught up with the Washoes in the sagebrush and drove them up a steep bluff. But here the Indians stopped and made a stand in a pile of rocks. When they opened fire, the pursuers promptly ducked behind trees. But the trees were scarce, and not very well distributed. One broad fellow named Harvey found himself behind a sapling, and offered to trade places with a slim companion who had a big tree. But this fair proposal was declined, and Harvey started a general retreat. Altogether, some ten Indians were killed and fourteen wounded, and one settler wounded, in Honey Lake's short-lived Potato War.

Until this time the Piute Indians, numbering from 15,000 to 20,000, had been friendly to the Susanville people. But they decided to join forces with the Washoes and wipe out the palefaces. At this point Peter Lassen took a hand and succeeded in making a treaty which spiked the feared coalition and brought peace to Honey Lake Valley.

JUST STARTING. Its stormy history, however, had only begun. As early as 1856 the Honey Lakers became incensed over the political state of affairs in California and decided to secede. On April 26 about 20 settlers, including Roop and Lassen, met at the Roop cabin and founded the "Territory of Nataqua" —an Indian word supposed to mean "woman." Their meeting place was made the territorial capitol. Roop was elected secretary and recorder, and Peter Lassen was named surveyor.

As a surveyor, Lassen was generous but not quite accurate. The new territory took in some 50,000 square miles of Northern California and Nevada, down to and including Lake Tahoe. But the capitol building of Susanville was left nearly 35 miles outside the border. Even the settlers farthest down Honey Lake Valley were almost 20 miles west of the line. And those citizens well inside the boundaries were never notified of their change of address.

WE WANT ONE TOO! But, before Congress could take any action on the Nataqua petition, the settlers of the Great Basin to the East decided that one new territory deserved another. They met in the little Mormon town of Genoa, at the Eastern foot of the Sierras, and formed a new Territory of Sierra Nevada. Its boundaries over-lapped considerably on the Nataqua borders, but the Honey Lake people weren't bothered. They simply joined up and got Isaac Roop elected provisional governor, with the capital fixed at Susanville.

Then Congress stepped in and created Nevada Territory in March, 1861, with the capital at Carson City. When California discovered that this included everything east of the Sierra crest, the fireworks began. As for the Honey Lakers, they had lost the capital but were beginning to think they had made good their secession from California.

The real trouble began when California tax-collectors from Quincy arrived at Susanville. A few citizens paid grudgingly, but some fifty of them were now confirmed rebels. They refused point blank, and backed up their stand with guns. Here began the Sagebrush or Boundary Line War, in which Roop's cabin was turned into Fort Defiance.

GOVERNMENT MEDDLING. But finally government surveyors ran the California-Nevada boundary line. The dispute was definitely settled when Honey Lake and Susanville were found to be in California. Still the Honey Lakers were secessionists at heart, and they were allowed to withdraw from Plumas County and form a separate Lassen County, with the seat at Susanville.

Meanwhile the original cause of Susanville's birth—a wagon route to Shasta—had come and gone. The Susanville route flared brightly in May and June, 1857, when it carried the first stagecoach from the California settlements to the state's eastern boundary. But this was hardly a commercial milestone. The participants were merely gay celebrants, armed with liquid refreshments, who chartered a California Stage Company vehicle at Oroville for a jaunt in the Sierras. They went up through Susanville and reached the state line—thus beating by only a few days a more sober and determined stage party out of Placerville. But the Central Pacific captured the Sierra traffic in 1867. As for the Susanville road, it passed into an era of inactivity, to await the eventual coming of oiled pavements.

UNROMANTIC PRESENT. Today Susanville, still the county seat of Lassen County, has grown to a population of 7500. Mining, Indian affairs and secessions are past. The town is known as a sportsman's outfitting point and trade center for the ranches of Honey Lake Valley. Her industries include sawmills, box factories and a door factory. The area around the town is used exclusively for grazing and agriculture, and by vacationists who like to hunt and fish, ski or just get away from the bustle of civilization.

Modern, citified Main Street sweeps up a slight rise to the heart of town. Booted men in wide-

brimmed hats lounge on her hotel porches or go leisurely about their affairs. The smoke-stacks and water towers of the mills and factories at the edge of town emphasize the busy air of the place, although pastures lie at the very edge of the business district. In the hollows around the industrial section are straggling lanes with houses, but as one goes up the rise, he comes to the tree-lined streets of the residential area.

The vast areas of timber land, both government property and private holdings, supply all the factories. Ponderosa and sugar pine, white, red and douglas fir, and incense cedar are the woods used primarily. Some of it is made into finished lumber, some into box shook, which is sent to agricultural producers.

Stock-raising is pursued on a tremendous scale, and in a highly scientific manner. And for the California hunters, the ranges are also stocked with blacktail and Mule deer.

MODERN FIGHTING. Surrounded by extremely valuable and combustible lands, Susanville is very much involved with fire fighting agencies. In Lassen County the California Division of Forestry annually handles an average of 40 to 50 forest fires, 20 to 25 structural fires and five to ten miscellaneous fires. In addition, the Lassen National Forest fire controls take care of around 125 forest fires a year. Around 50 of these are man-caused and the rest are started by lightning.

So historic Susanville still has its excitement, with the heroics performed by firefighters instead of gold-seekers, Indian fighters and California rebels. Perhaps it takes the rugged type to appreciate this breathless Sierra scenery and wide-open country, the craggy peaks on the one hand and the endless Nevada horizon on the other.

Only the Roop cabin now commemorates Susanville's first citizen—a man who dared to be provisional governor of the rebel territory of Sierra Nevada. As for Peter Lassen, his name lives on in Lassen County, Lassen National Forest, Lassen Peak and Lassen Volcanic National Park. And true to the tradition of the Susanville country, the mountain and most of the park lie outside Lassen County.

PLACERVILLE

Hangtown & Horace Greeley

NO VISITOR is allowed to leave Placerville without hearing two stories—how it got its early name of Hangtown, and how Horace Greeley arrived after his wild stage ride over the Sierra. But these are only a part, and a small one at that, of the heritage of rare old Placerville. Its narrow and winding streets, nestled in a pine-clad fold of the Sierra foothills, saw the ebb and flow of California history for two uproarious decades. It was, by turns, the first big gold camp after the discovery at Coloma; the hell-roaring gateway to California for the overland Argonauts; depot for the stampede back across the Sierras to the Comstock Lode.

Placerville has had three names in her lifetime—each of the highly appropriate. Situated only nine miles from Sutter's mill, she was founded in the early summer of 1848 when miners discovered gold in a dry ravine and named the new camp Drytown. When news spread that men were digging from $48 to $1280 in a single day, the rush began.

By autumn it was a thriving camp, composed first of tents and log cabins, then of board and shingle stores, muddy streets and surging traffic. By the winter of 1849 gold was still plentiful, but not plentiful enough to prevent the rise of crime. In January five men broke into a gambler's room and while one of them held a pistol at his head, rifled his belongings. They were immediately captured, tried by a vigilance court of two hundred irate miners, and given thirty-five lashes each. Then three of them were charged with robbery and attempted murder on the Stanislaus River. A miner's jury found them guilty again.

"What shall be done with them?" demanded the acting judge.

"Hang them!" someone shouted. And though one miner mounted a stump and pleaded against lynch law, the three men were placed in a wagon, driven under a tree on the main street, and each fitted with a noose. At a signal, the wagon was driven out from under them.

THE NAME. Since this was the first lynching on the Mother Lode, Placerville quickly got its second name—Hangtown.

The event and the name had a civilizing influence. Bad men were on their good behavior in this strict camp. And as the mines prospered, the town went metropolitan. Regular stages arrived in 1851, bringing passengers to several hotels which offered such luxuries as tablecloths and silver service. In fact, the place was becoming famous abroad for other things beside lynch law. An imaginative cook put together eggs, bacon, oysters and other grease-loving ingredients in what became known as a "Hangtown Fry." The concoction appealed to hardy stomachs, and was soon a celebrated dish up and down the Mother Lode. Leading restaurants in San Francisco had to put it on the menu to satisfy visiting miners.

To its culinary culture, Hangtown also added a spirit of gallantry not easily found in the uncouth mines. A beautiful young widow wanted to marry a second husband and asked the mayor to officiate. He objected when it was found that the widowhood rested on a three months absence by the first husband. But a visiting California mayor heard the story and heatedly disagreed. Any man who would leave such a woman for three months, he said, must be either dead or crazy. So he married the couple himself.

FAMILY LIFE. As whole families moved in to replace a strictly male population, Hangtown became positively genteel. It got so the young ladies parading along the streets in their fine hoop skirts were unapproachable. "They're dreadful shy of Forty-niners, turn their noses up at miners," ran a rousing Gold Rush song called "Hangtown Gals."

And when Hangtown acquired a temperance league and a Methodist Church, the seal was placed on her lawless days. Agitation began for a less morbid name.

Besides, the hangman's tree was no longer the town's most distinctive feature. Gold had been discovered in the neighboring creek, and on the approaches to town groups of men were working feverishly at the business of placer mining. Standing barefooted in icy mountain water, they were shoveling sand into long toms, the trough-like contraptions which separated the gold. In fact, one eager prospector struck pay dirt in the center of town, and the boys descended on it with pick and shovel. A visitor found parties of energetic miners digging holes and operating long toms right in the middle of Main Street and even in some of the houses.

"There was a continual noise and clatter," he reported, "as mud, dirt, stones and water were thrown about in all directions."

Yes, old Hangtown had changed, and the people began clamoring for a more fitting name—Placerville. In 1850 the Legislature gave it the new title, though the disagreeable "Hangtown" persisted in popular usage for some years. But as Placerville it was incorporated in 1854, and as Placerville it supplanted Coloma as the seat of El Dorado County three years later.

END OF THE TRAIL. By this time the placers that had given it a name were fading, but the town lived high through the '50s as the roistering terminus of the Overland Trail. Earliest gold hunters had gone over Truckee Pass and into California by way of the Yuba and Feather Rivers. But in the early '50s most of the wagons dropped below Lake Tahoe, down the South Fork of the American River and into Placerville.

Through the high tide of the Gold Rush, this was the hoped-for haven after a 2300 mile trek across the American desert and over the lofty Sierras. One weary wagon train, with its chains jingling and mules snorting as they had every day since leaving the bend of the Missouri, was drawing near Placerville when an almost-forgotten noise split the air. A rooster had crowed! Without a signal, the wagons halted and the astonished men let out a chorus of yells. Here, at last, was civilization.

The town at the end of that covered wagon trail was not a pretentious sight. One arrival called it "one long straggling street of clapboard houses and log cabins." Through this narrow thoroughfare, blocked with miner's diggings and knee-deep mud puddles, sloshed bearded Argonauts, six horse stages, plodding ox and mule teams. The only paving was a litter of "old boots, hats, and shirts, old sardine boxes, empty tins of preserved oysters, empty bottles, worn-out pots and kettles, old ham-bones, broken picks and shovels . . ."

The unique institution of the town was its general stores, which served as combination saloon, grocer's, hardware shop and social hall. Behind the counter, which was also a bar, were stacked whisky bottles, canned fish, bottled pickles, and every conceivable item. And prices? An ounce of gold dust ($16) bought a pound of gun powder, a chicken or a bottle of champagne. Business was thriving, but conducted with pure informality. The storekeeper customarily sat with miners at a rude table, playing seven-up for "the drinks."

In snowy weather, a customer could comfortably spend a whole day in one of these retreats, provided his credit was good. Witness, for example, the story told by one page of a daybook from an old Placerville store: "Mr. Boyer 6.25—2 drinks, .50; 1 ditto, .25; 1 plug tobacco, .50; 2 drinks, .50 ½ pie, .50; 1 drink, .25; 5 drinks, 1.25; ¼ pie, .25; 1 drink, .25; ½ pie, 50; 2 drinks, .50; 1 ditto, .25; 1 drink, .25." There is no record of a final necessity: 1 stretcher.

DESTINY. Probably it was such a grocery store as this that Mark Hopkins started in 1849; here he launched on a career which made him one of the Big Four rail builders, the first to span the Sierras with steel. The one item which the stores did not carry was meat; this was handled exclusively by butchers, and one of these was Philip D. Armour, who began here his upward climb in the meat packing game. Still another Placerville pioneer was John M. Studebaker, who made wheelbarrows for the miners and saved the $4000 with which he started his wagon-building business in South Bend, Indiana. Today, sleek Studebakers roll over Placerville streets once trod by the original, one wheel model.

Meanwhile Placerville was taking on a permanent air. Stone and brick buildings were lining her winding streets. Among these were such cultural necessities as an ornate theater, where Lotta Crabtree played to packed houses, and the grand old Carey House, the luxury hotel whose register bore such names as Mark Twain and Horace Greeley.

A decline in mining and a devastating fire gave Placerville a double blow in 1856, but her greatest days were yet to come. It was in June, 1857, that Jared B. Crandall, one of California's stagecoach kings, drove his Concord out of Placerville and into the Sierra pines. In the next few days, accompanied by directors of his company, he prodded his six horses over rocky ledges and steep ravines, across Johnson Pass and down into the Mormon village of Genoa, in what would later be Nevada Territory. Then they fought their way back, to be hilariously greeted at Placerville by a shouting, shooting crowd.

It was the first stage over the Sierras between California and the Carson Valley. While state officials talked of surveys and road appropriations, Crandall had proven that the route was feasible—with no road but the primitive emigrant trail. After that, Crandall's stages ran biweekly over the great barrier, soon connecting with another stage line spanning the Utah desert to bring California into direct communication with the Atlantic. Placerville was a major milestone on the path of empire.

But the line had its disadvantages. Those six-horse stages careened along precipitous mountain roads that defied gravity and paled the tenderfoot passenger. In winter the coaches were withdrawn, leaving it to that intrepid postman, Snowshoe Thompson, to carry the mail between Placerville and the Carson Valley.

VISITING JOURNALIST. But by 1859 the route was becoming almost civilized. Such furious whips as Hank Monk would take their coaches through in several hours, with never a quiver, though perhaps they had brushed death a dozen times. In that year along came Horace Greeley, America's great publisher and crusader, who was just then interested in a transcontinental Western railroad. On the bouncing stage ride from Missouri he'd already been spilled on the prairie when a herd of buffalo stampeded the stage horses and overturned the coach; dumped into the Laramie River when the vehicle capsized again; plunged once more into the Sweetwater River, where he lost a trunk full of manuscripts; and generally shaken up and beaten down by the incessant bumping and swaying of a three week stage ride.

At the foot of the Sierras he encountered the incomparable Hank Monk, whose coach promptly whirled him out of the desert and into the clouds. Over hair-tingling Sierra roads lurched the stage, as Horace himself said, "just as fast as four wild California horses, whom two men could scarcely harness, could draw it." When they clattered into Placerville, a dishevelled and discomposed Greeley emerged from the coach and before the crowd could capture him, made his way to the Carey House bar. The Placerville crowd that had turned out for a grand welcome found him there, and escorted him to a waiting banquet table. There, in response to ringing toasts, the poor man arose—not from a chair, according to press accounts, but from a couch. Whether or not he said so then, he later admitted:

"I cannot conscientiously recommend the route I have traveled to summer tourists in quest of pleasure, but it is a balm for many bruises to know that I am at last in California."

This much is fact. But Placerville, delighted at this priceless joke on Horace, blew it into something more. Within a few months every journalist and storyteller who came to California was repeating it —with embellishments. Artemus Ward, the great prankster of the 19th Century, passed through Placerville shortly after and dressed up the story like this:

When Greeley was put aboard Monk's stagecoach, the driver was ordered to deliver him in Placerville for a speaking engagement at seven o'clock. Off dashed the coach with such furious speed and fearful bouncing that Greeley soon decided he wasn't in such a hurry, after all.

"Sir," he told Monk out the window, "I don't care if we don't get there at seven!"

"I have got my orders," retorted the driver, and urged the horses to a faster pace. Finally Horace poked his head out again.

"I don't care," he pleaded, "if we don't get there at all."

"I've got my orders," shouted Hank, and went madly on. Then a jarring bump sent Greeley's head crashing through the roof of the coach. "Keep your seat, Horace," ordered the unruffled Hank Monk.

Just outside of Placerville a welcoming committee, complete with brass band, stopped the stage to take Greeley and carry him in honor to the city, but Hank whipped up the team and scattered the crowd with the cry "I've got my orders!"

When Mark Twain came along in 1861, he first heard the story from a stage driver at the Platte River. Out of Denver a passenger related it in identical words. A cavalry sergeant from Fort Bridger repeated the exact yarn, followed by a Mormon preacher who got on at Salt Lake. Along the Carson River they picked up a half-dead wanderer who launched into the same story.

Mark Twain then rebelled, "Suffering stranger," he warned, "proceed at your peril." The man stopped, but as Twain claimed, "In trying to retain the anecdote in his system he strained himself and died in our arms."

Over his next six years in California and Nevada the humorist heard that "deathless incident 81 or 82 times—from drivers and passengers, Chinese and Indians, flavored with every aroma including "whisky, brandy, beer, cologne, sozodont, tobacco, garlic, onions, grasshoppers . . ." Mark Twain has been spared the thousands of retellings since then, and today any Placerville patriot believes that Horace Greeley came whirling into town on Hank Monk's stage with his head sticking through the top.

LAST GLORY. It was in the same year of Greeley's trip that Placerville swung into its final, furious hour. The fabulous Comstock Lode was discovered, and as the tide of humanity swung back over the Sierra to the lure of silver, Placerville became the main outfitting point. It even aspired to become a railroad center when work began on the "Placerville and Sacramento Valley Railroad." But the rails stopped at Shingle Springs a few miles short of town, and the rival Central Pacific line of the Big Four pushed on over the Sierras. After 1867 Placerville lost her traffic to the railroaders.

But the quaint old camp, its streets still following the original mule paths, thrives today as the center of a lumber, mineral and vineyard country. And the town which once changed its name to Placerville out of civic pride, today insists on telling everybody (for the same reason) that its name used to be Hangtown.

The SOUTHERN MINES

The gold country's Northern Mines, served mainly by the trading center of Marysville, were noted for rugged Alpine scenery and a distinct American character. But the Southern Mines were different. Reached largely through the river port of Stockton, they nestled in oak-dotted hills typical of California. More important, they had a cosmopolitan flavor. Among the earliest arrivals were native Californians, Mexicans, Chileans, Frenchmen. The Southern Mines had their fandango halls, their bull-and-bear fights—and their grim racial clashes.

With some exceptions, the southern camps never got down to the hard rock mining that saved the northern towns. So the Southern Mines can tell us the turbulent gold rush story in its simplest, most dramatic form—the discovery period of 1848, the reckless boom years of 1849 to '53, the failing of the placer mines and the financial panic of '55. Though California has never stopped mining gold, these first seven years were the real golden era—the surging, hell-bent years from which California has never quite recovered.

SONORA

Queen of the Southern Mines

"SONORA IS A fast place and no mistake," wrote a citizen of 1851. "We have more gamblers, more drunkards, more ugly, bad women, and larger lumps of gold, and more of them, than any other place of similar dimensions within Uncle Sam's dominions."

In its Gold Rush heyday, Sonora was a city of superlatives. With a permanent population of five thousand, it was the biggest in the Southern Mines. With a total yield of over $600,000,000 from Tuolumne County mines, it was also the richest. And with an average of around one unpunished murder a week, it was certainly the wildest.

Though more than sixty miles south of the discovery site at Coloma, Sonora was one of the first Mother Lode camps. Among the original Forty-Eighters were Mexicans from the state of Sonora. As early as August they found rich placers on the Stanislaus and Tuolumne Rivers, and settled what came to be called the Sonorian Camp.

It proved a fabulous treasure. The gold was coarse and nuggets were frequent. In the first months, men were taking out several ounces apiece daily. With the help of two Indians, one California ranchero mined forty-five ounces ($720) in a single day.

This kind of news traveled fast. By early 1849, Sonora was no longer a Mexican camp. American miners jammed the decks of river steamers to Stockton, then raised a continuous cloud of dust on the trail to the new diggings. At night, campfires lighted the road all the way from Stockton to Sonora. By the end of 1849 there were over ten thousand Mexicans and four thousand Americans and Europeans in the Sonora district.

From then on, the town was the most cosmopolitan center in the mines. Its streets were lined with a conglomeration of Spanish-type adobes, with their over-hanging balconies, and American frame buildings of high false fronts. Its saloons and gambling dens were lavishly decorated with crystal chandeliers and sexy paintings; entertainment varied from brass bands to strolling guitarists to a lady piano-player "in black velvet who sings in Italian." On Sunday, a day reserved for merry-making, the visitor could take in anything from a bullfight to a circus.

From the moment the Forty-niners arrived, Sonora's day of peace and plenty was over. The lusty Americans, convinced of a divine right to dominate the continent, had just had their belief confirmed by the Mexican War. California was theirs, and they had no intention of letting the best mines fall to Mexicans, whether from Sonora or California. There followed a shameful campaign of abuse against the "foreigners."

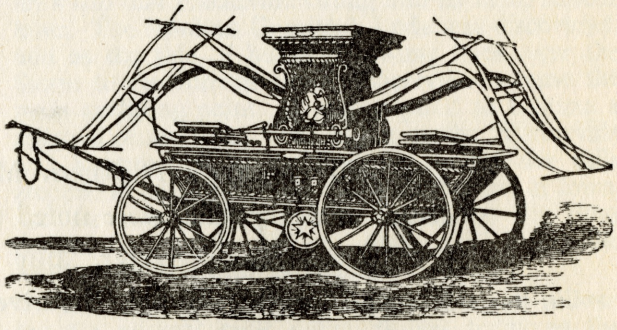
THE FIGHT. At first the Mexicans gave up their claims without a fight, but in July, 1849, fifteen hundred more of them reached the Tuolumne diggings. In the clash that followed, Sonora was the storm center. Many of the persecuted Mexicans took to outlawry and preyed on their tormentors. Within one month twelve murders were committed in and around Sonora.

This explosive situation was capped in June, 1850, when the state Legislature passed a law requiring a $30 tax from all foreign miners—an open jab at the Mexican population. When the collector arrived in Sonora to levy this iniquitous tax, the fireworks began.

Thousands of Mexicans in the district held meetings, denounced the tax and swore to defy the authorities. At this, the Americans armed themselves and marched into Sonora, where they organized a rifle company and set up a night patrol in the streets. Mexican guerrillas stepped up their raids; miners slept with their gold dust under their pillows, but even then thieves dared to rob them. The men camping on the hillside above town took turns standing watch through the night.

"No man dreams of travelling without the pistol and the knife," said the Sonora *Herald*.

CAMP FIRE? On July 10, in the midst of this tension, miners at a nearby camp discovered three Indians and a Mexican burning the bodies of two



Americans. Concluding that they were the murderers, the enraged men marched the four into Sonora and turned the town into a frenzy. While the prisoners were given a preliminary hearing, hundreds of angry citizens gathered at the courthouse. The accused were abruptly snatched away and borne to a tree on a nearby hill. Here the mob selected a jury, held a rump court, and found the four guilty.

Ropes were quickly looped around their necks and the Mexican was already swinging in the air when four county officials broke through crowd and halted the lynching. In a moment Sheriff George Work and a deputy were backing them up with leveled revolvers. The miners grudgingly parted ranks and allowed the four to be taken to jail.

Four days later, while Sonora still seethed, a rumor ran through town that a number of Mexican guerrillas — allies of the prisoners — were camped several miles away. The Sheriff then struck out with twenty armed riders and came back with no less than 110 Mexican prisoners—all murder suspects. They were herded into a corral to await examination. Next day, when the four original captives were to be tried, a thousand more miners marched into town from the hills to make the confusion complete.

ANGRY MOB. That afternoon the courthouse was packed with armed citizens for the opening of

the trial. In that anxious moment a pistol went off accidentally. Pandemonium took over. A hundred guns were out and the shooting was general. The courthouse instantly disgorged its contents by every door and window. Out of the buildings in Sonora's streets men came running with revolver and rifle, some of them shooting at several Mexican bystanders.

Amid the dust and smoke, the District Attorney mounted a stump in the street and pleaded for order. When the crisis had passed, the only bloodshed was found to be the wounded wrist of the original shooter.

Somewhat sheepishly, the Sonora crowd settled down to wait out the trial. Finally it was determined that the four prisoners had found the two bodies several days after the murder, and had been cremating them according to their religious custom—as an act of charity. As for the 110 Mexicans in the corral, they were each examined, exonerated, and in the words of the presiding judge, sent "joyfully homeward." Most of them having arrived at the mines only a few days before, they gained a rather negative first impression.

But Sonora's temper still raged. With rumors reaching town of more murders, a mass meeting was held July 20—attended by several thousand armed miners. Lacking any murder suspects, they vented their anger on Mexicans in general. Resolutions were passed ordering all foreigners to get off Tuolumne County in fifteen days, and furthermore, to give up their firearms. They might avoid either penalty by getting a permit from a committee of three Americans in each camp, who would decide which foreigners were "persons engaged in permanent business and of respectable characters."

TENSION. For several days after this fanatical outburst, Sonora was an armed camp. At night guards stood watch at the edges of town to meet a surprise attack. The banishment order was actually enforced in a few outlying camps, but most harassed Mexicans needed no invitation to leave. Two hundred of them, all with pack burros and some with families, passed through Sonora on their way back to Mexico—a sorrowful and disillusioned company.

By September, with three-fourths of the Mexicans gone, Sonora was a dead town. With its population shrunk from five thousand to three thousand, it lapsed into hard times. The Sonora *Herald* suspended for lack of patronage, and one citizen noted with relief that in six weeks "there have been only two men shot in our streets."

In 1851 the foreign miners tax was repealed, and Mexicans felt a measure of safety in Tuolumne County. But Sonora's big boom had been killed by mobocracy at its worst.

Still, the Queen of the Southern Mines was not downed this easily. She was the center of a galaxy of lesser mining camps, from Jamestown and Tuttletown on the West to Chinese Camp and Coulterville on the South. She was soon gaining a degree of refinement which set her apart from her rougher neighbors.

In Sonora the traveler could get decent lodging in several clean hotels, could even enjoy that almost forgotten luxury, ice cream. With snow regularly packed in on mules from the higher mountains, even the drinks were iced.

SUNDAY BEST. On Sundays the population, miners and all, turned out in its best attire. The most striking item of dress was a bright silk neckerchief—usually red—which was tied loosely over the chest and hung over one shoulder. Some local dandies had their broad-brimmed hats decked with feathers, flowers, or squirrels' tails. Many tried to outdo each other with fancy whisker styles; some beards were braided and coiled up "like a twist of tobacco," while others were separated into three tails which reached to the belt. One extremist divided his long beard in two and tied it in a big bow under his chin, where it served as a necktie.

The reason for all this foppery in the midst of the Gold Rush was obvious enough. In yard after yard on Sonora's residential streets, clotheslines were now hung with dresses and petticoats.

"Time was," observed the Sonora *Herald* in July, 1852, "when the presence of virtuous women in the mines was a thing wished for, not enjoyed."

Even this was not the most striking evidence of Sonora's orderliness, according to one visitor who had traveled the length of the Mother Lode. When he saw a policeman collar a disorderly drunk and march him sternly off to jail, he knew he had reached civilization.

But Sonora still had more than its share of crime —and its own peculiar methods of dealing with it. Robbery was the most heinous offense — with punishment ranging from hanging to whipping and banishment. Murder was something else again. One convicted killer was let off with a $500 fine. Another was sentenced to two years in prison, and a few days later the case was closed with the official notation, "He broke jale and run off."

THE BOSS. The magistrate of old Sonora was a priceless character, Major Richard C. Barry—a veteran of the Texas war of independence and the Mexican War. A stocky, red-faced frontiersman, Barry became Justice of the Peace in 1850 and brought Sonora a certain amount of order—but no law. Ignorant, prejudiced, bullheaded, and inordinately proud, Barry was the legal dictator of Tuolumne County. His surviving docket, kept on scraps of paper, records the most amazing justice court ever operating under the United States Constitution. Take the case of Jesus Ramirez, who was charged with no less an offense than stealing a mule from the Sheriff, George Work. Reported Justice Barry:

"George swares the Mule in question is hisn and I believe so to on heering the caze I found Jesus Ramirez guilty of feloaniusly and against the law made and provided and the dignity of the people of Sonora steeling the aforesade mare Mule sentensed him to pay the costs of Coort 10 dolars, and fined him a 100 dolars more as a terrour to all evel dooers. Jesus Ramirez not having any munney to pay with I rooled that George Work shuld pay the costs of Court, as well as the fine . . ."

For some reason, this admirable arrangement brought protest.

"H. P. Barber, the lawyer for George Work in solently told me there were no law fur me to rool so I told him that I didn't care a damn for his book law, that I was the Law myself. He jawed back so I told him to shetup but he wouldn't so I fined him 50 dolars, and comited to gaol for 5 days for contempt of Coort in bringing my rooling and dississions into disreputableness and as a warning to unrooly citizens not to contredict this Coort."

CALM DAYS. Sonora's days of frontier justice are gone, but unlike most gold camps of the South-

ern Mines, she is still a thriving city—the center of a mining, lumbering and orchard country. Many old buildings remain, but most of them are now camouflaged with paint and stucco. The Opera Hall Garage building was the theater in old Sonora. At the North end of town is the ruin of the Bauman Brewery, which once administered to one of the thirstiest populations in the mines.

More picturesque buildings and ruins stand at nearby Jamestown, still a busy community; at Chinese Camp, settled mainly by Oriental gold-seekers; at La Grange, setting of more than one Bret Harte tale; at Coulterville, one of the best preserved of the old camps; and Murphy's, as colorful as any gold rush town. These were some of the satellites of a Sonora which was, in its halcyon days, a metropolis on the Mother Lode.

VOLCANO

& The Amador Mines

THE BEST OF Mother Lode ghost towns lie off the beaten path, and near the top of the list is Volcano. From Jackson in Amador County, a good road takes you twelve miles to what is left of one of the rousing camps of the Gold Rush. And what is left fairly breathes the flavor of Forty-nine.

This whole Amador country, in fact, could be called the heart of the Mother Lode. Situated just south of Placerville and Coloma, it was explored within weeks of the first strike at Sutter's Mill. Some of it was as rich as any ground in the California mines. All of it was reckless, rowdy and typically Gold Rush.

First of all, this was the land of contradictory names. Contrary to miner's belief, there were no volcanoes at Volcano. Fiddletown was supposedly named for the numbers of Missouri fiddlers who took turns playing a tune while their partners mined the stream; but a visitor of 1850 reported that "not a fiddler was to be had in Fiddletown." And Drytown had, in its heydey, twenty-six saloons. Of course, there were other local names which were only too true: Helltown, Hogtown, Loafer Flat, Bedbug, Porkerville (now Plymouth), Whisky Slide, Murderer's Gulch.

Miners first struck color on the Cosumnes River and points south in the spring of 1848. Captain John A. Sutter, making one effort to mine gold on his own account, was one of the earliest arrivals. On what is now Sutter Creek he worked the placers with a force of Indians and Pacific Islanders. But the Yankee miners who swarmed up and down the creek called it slavery, and Sutter eventually departed under pressure of public opinion..

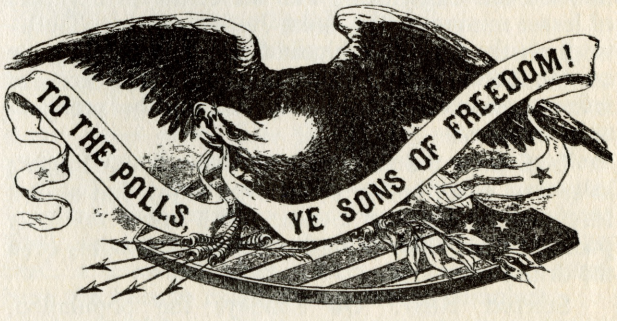
BIG EXCITEMENT. Despite its remoteness, Volcano was the first real excitement of the Amador country. Troops who had come to California in the American conquest were the first Argonauts on the ground, giving the place its original name of Soldier Gulch. They found placers and clay beds so rich that the early comers averaged $100 per day. Some ground yielded $500 to the panful. By 1849, gold-seekers were pouring into the new camp. Finding rocks and crags which resembled volcanic craters, they mistakenly gave it the name of Volcano.

But the wilderness camp was born to trouble. Sierra Indians, having discovered the value of white man's gold, were also mining in Volcano. Natives and intruders got along well enough until the summer of 1849. One day an American missed his pick, and claimed the Indians had stolen it. The chief, anxious to preserve peace, told a group of miners that if the pick was in the Indian camp, he would bring it back. When he ran off to fulfill the mission, an American rifle cracked and brought him down. Rod Stowell, a former Texas Ranger, had mistaken the Indian's move and was too quick on the trigger.

Volcano's peace was broken, and the outraged Indians prepared for war. To cover their own blunder, the Americans who had precipitated the trouble announced to their comrades that the Indians had attacked them and murdered one. At this, the whites armed themselves and stormed the Indian stronghold. The natives were driven out, but not without leaving at least one American dead on the Volcano trail. This was the end of the Volcano War —except that when its citizens discovered that the Stowell group had lied about the cause of the trouble, they ran the rogues out of camp.

But Rod Stowell seemed intent on making himself the bad man of Volcano. Later on he turned up in town, got into a fight with a Missourian, and stabbed him to death. Easy-going Volcano let him off on self-defense. Finally he found himself in a fracas over the ownership of some cattle and wounded two opponents. Stowell himself was injured, but Volcano had lost its patience and decided that his foes had not aimed well enough. At a miner's meeting he was sentenced to hang. Then both his victims recovered in time to change Volcano's mind. Rod Stowell was released, but his brush with the noose made him walk softly thereafter—at least in Volcano.

EASY LAW. The episode was typical, however, of Volcano's light respect for legalities. In the first state elections of 1849, territorial officials neglected



to notify Volcano. But Bayard Taylor, news correspondent for Horace Greeley's New York *Tribune,* visited the town in the same month and carried with him some political messages from candidates in Mokelumne Hill. The Volcano boys concluded that he was an official who had come to call an election, and insisted on it even after Taylor pleaded that he was a reporter. So he consulted with the Alcalde (a combination mayor, sheriff and judge), and recommended an election procedure. They not only followed this out scrupulously, but finding a candidate on the ballot with the name of Taylor, mistook him for their visitor and gave him a unanimous vote.

"Had I known this fact sooner," noted Bayard Taylor, "I might have been tempted to run for Alcalde, at least."

The majesty of government was just as carelessly dismissed throughout the Amador country. Justice was less a matter of due process than of mob decision. At Sutter Creek a gambler stabbed a man, and was immediately tried by miner's court; he was given seventy-five lashes while the victim still lived, but was hanged next day when the man died—a double punishment which seemed perfectly reasonable to Sutter Creek. When a stabbing occurred in Volcano, the boys lynched the supposed culprit within half an hour. In Fiddletown, $9,000 was taken from the Wells Fargo office, and five men were arrested for the crime for the good and sufficient reason that they had bad reputations.

Lacking evidence, the boys sought to produce some by taking out three of the prisoners and hoisting them by the neck until they confessed. But with much hoisting the score stood: no confessions, no evidence, and after the Sheriff arrived from Jackson, no prisoners.

Fiddletown, in fact, was quite at home outside the law. Before Amador County was established, it somehow managed to reside in a no-man's land between El Dorado and Calaveras counties. It was perfectly willing to vote with El Dorado, but at tax collecting time it stood squarely behind its geographic barriers. Fiddletown, too, produced a classic in courtroom procedure. When a witness exhausted the court with his outlandish story, the judge took care of the situation:

"I declare court adjourned. This man is a damned liar. Court is in session."

Things were much the same in Amador City. Justice of the Peace for 1854 was Henry Lark, a horse-trader who held court in the Magnolia Saloon. He was playing seven-up with the bartender one day when Sheriff Jim Wall hauled in a man accused of stealing meat from his neighbor. The Sheriff knew better than to break up the game.

"Here judge, give me your hand while you settle this business."

"Git, and don't bother me!" answered the magistrate, who was evidently winning. But at the end of the hand he managed to change places with the sheriff. Throwing his leg over the table, he scrutinized the prisoner.

"Well, what you got to say for yourself?"

"I beg," cut in the barkeep.

"I'll see you damned first," retorted the sheriff.

"Sheriff, keep silence in the court," shouted the judge. A moment of quiet, as Justice Lark resumed his questioning.

"Cut the kerds, Barkeep."

"Run 'em."

"I was only borrowin' the meat, your Honor."

"No, you don't, Mr. Wall; put your little old jack on that ace!"

"Either this court or that game must adjourn if you don't make less noise!"

"One moment, Judge; count your game, Wall."

"High, jack, game."

"Silence in court!"

More quiet, while the judge continued the examination. At the next shout from the bar he jumped up, furious, but caught a glimpse of the barkeeper's hand.

"Wall," said the justice, "I'll bet you five dollars you're beaten."

"Done! Come down with the cash."

The judge sharply watched the play, the sheriff won, and the prisoner—quietly remembering a previous appointment—vanished.

"Fraud and cheating!" screamed Justice Lark. "I fine you both ten dollars for contempt of court."

"WAY AWAY." If Amador County played loose with the law, its isolation was partly to blame. Though it was located just south of Coloma and Placerville, the region was off the main routes of travel. For the first two years of the Gold Rush, its traffic moved along trails by foot or horseback. When a wagon did get through with supplies, prices were as rugged as the country; flour $1 a pound, vinegar $5 a gallon and apples $1 apiece.

Volcano was so remote that when a visitor from Jackson paid for his room and a round of drinks with a $20 gold piece, its citizens promptly gathered around and viewed it as a curiosity. The Jackson men whooped over this story until the Volcano editor explained. What surprised his neighbors, he said, was that a Jacksonian would own $20 outright, that he would buy anybody a drink and that he would settle his hotel bill before skipping town.

Be that as it may, regular communication came late to these backwoods. To Placerville in the north and Sonora in the south, six-horse stages had been running for a full year before they entered Amador. By late 1851 they ventured through Drytown to Jackson; later they branched to Fiddletown, and finally rocked into Volcano in 1854. If civilization had not reached the Amador towns, it was at least connected to them by road and wheels.

Volcano took naturally to this invasion. Downstages carrying out gold shipments were apt to encounter masked men who took professional interest in the Wells Fargo box. It was soon noticed that they were remarkably adept at guessing which coaches carried the loot, and the suspicion was raised that they just might be getting inside help. Unable to catch the robbers, Wells Fargo finally took the hint and pulled out of Volcano. That ungrateful camp could shift for itself.

Yet by the mid-Fifties Volcano was succumbing to civilization. Along its main streets rose permanent stone buildings with the inevitable iron shutters; many of these, including the imposing St. George Hotel, remain to make Volcano one of the most substantial ghosts in California. At the same time the camp acquired a fire company, a militia company proudly known as the Volcano Blues, a theatrical group—the Volcano Thespian Society, and what is said to be the first rental library in the state. The latter didn't last, however, because the boys habitually forgot to return the books.

Meanwhile, the rest of Amador had taken more permanent root with the discovery of rich quartz veins. First strike was made at Amador City in February 1851 by a Baptist preacher; an indirect descendent of this and neighboring mines is the famous Keystone, one of the most fabulous gold producers of California. Quartz leads were also discovered at Sutter Creek in 1851, and the next year in Fiddletown. Together with the lode mines of Jackson, these produced the real gold boom of Amador County.

Despite its provincial name, Fiddletown became an important point on the Mother Lode. As late as the 1860s it was a trading outpost for surrounding camps. Bret Harte publicized it with his "An Episode of Fiddletown." But by 1878 its citizens could no longer see the joke in its priceless name, and changed it to the miserable title, Oleta. But after half a century they came to their senses, and today its entrance sign announces, almost impudently, that this is Fiddletown.

As for Volcano, it lay largely outside the quartz belt. By 1855 it was resorting to hydraulic mining, and was showing signs of wear. But if Volcano died early, its remains have outlasted those of other camps down on the traveled highway. Volcano is still Volcano, though its erupting days are over.

MOK HILL

& It's Feudin' Twin, Jackson

IF CALIFORNIANS are incorrigible hometown boosters, they can lay the original blame on the exuberant citizens of the Gold Rush camps. And the finest examples of this local jingoism were the neighboring (and feuding) towns of Mokelumne Hill and Jackson, in the heart of the Southern Mines.

From the beginning these two camps were headed for trouble out of conflict of character. Mok Hill, as it was called, was the northernmost of the camps with a cosmopolitan flavor. Here were large colonies of Frenchmen, native Californians, Mexicans and Chileans; here flourished the fandango hall and the bull-and-bear fight. Jackson had its mixed population, but it definitely bore the American stamp. There were other differences—enough to put a sharp edge on inter-camp competition.

The twin towns also had plenty in common. They were rich and they were tough. At Mokelumne, one miner took out $6,000 in two days; another found a nugget weighing eleven pounds. Near Jackson some of the men mined as much as $500 each per day—while it lasted; and beginning in the 1850s Jackson began to yield an underground treasure from her famous quartz mines.

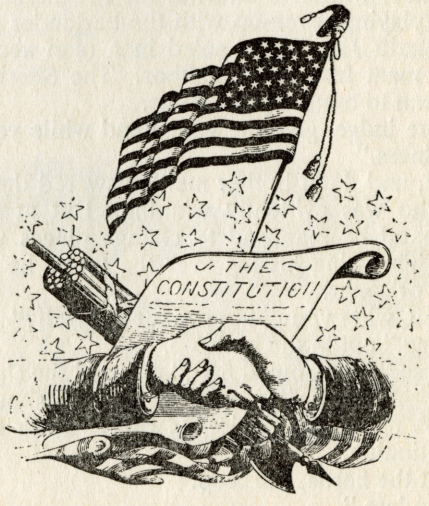
In lawlessness the camps were also rivals. In both places the man who was robbed looked to his own gun rather than to the law for justice; and if he shot one of the offenders there was no thought of a trial. Mokelumne had at least two lynchings and, according to one report, five killings in one week. Jackson was supposed to have hanged ten to fifteen men, depending on varying estimates, from the same execution tree.

When the Gold Rush began, Mok Hill got a head start on its neighbor. Discovered in the fall of 1848, it was a thriving, canvas-tented camp within a year. Jackson, in fact, was founded as a way station on the road from Sacramento to Mokelumne Hill; by the end of 1849 its population was only some sixty persons. But as rich diggings were uncovered along Jackson Creek, the camp flourished in its own right.

Then trouble began. Calaveras County (which then included Jackson) was formed in 1850, and the county seat was won by the nearby camp of Double Springs. Since it had only one building, Jackson and Mok Hill considered this a deliberate insult. So in July, 1851, an election was held to relocate the county seat. Mokelumne, still having the larger population, naturally won—or at least that was the result reported by the county clerk, Colonel Collyer.

MORE! But the Jackson men were not through. Three of them rode down to Double Springs and invited everybody in the Courthouse (which also served as saloon) to drink to the new county seat, Mok Hill. This suggestion could hardly be ignored, even by Col. Collyer. And while everybody was toasting, one Jackson man grabbed the official records from a nearby table, threw them in a wagon and dashed off to the new seat of Calaveras County. By the time the County Clerk arrived, one Judge Smith had recounted the ballots and declared Jackson the winner. This was county government, Gold Rush style.

Col. Collyer accepted the situation and set up office in Jackson. But when he was defeated at the next election, he adopted the Jackson system and locked up the ballots. Judge Smith thereupon broke into his desk, counted the votes and declared Collyer the loser. The Colonel was outraged at Jackson's double standards and at Judge Smith in particular. He made the mistake of promising to shoot the Judge on sight, and lost out a third time in a contest of bullets.



Meanwhile, Jackson's triumph as the county seat lasted only nine months. In April, 1852, Mokelumne Hill won a second election, and possession of the crucial records. Jackson and neighboring camps then walked out of Calaveras and formed their own Amador County—with Jackson as the official seat. As for Mokelumne, it finally relinquished the seat of Calaveras County in 1866 to the more permanent community of San Andreas. This time Jackson had no objections.

HO HUM! The miners did not always take their elections seriously. When California applied for admission to the Union in 1849, a convention assembled at Monterey and framed a state constitution. With characteristic audacity, California held an election in November, 1849, for ratifying the Constitution and choosing state officers—before Congress had fairly begun to debate the question of admission. At Mok Hill, as elsewhere in California, election day was rainy and miserable. Despite the momentous occasion, few citizens stirred out of their tents until noon. Finally the Alcalde appointed two inspectors and set up the polls in the camp's largest tent — a saloon. Observing the scene was the 19th Century journalist and author, Bayard Taylor, who noted that the inspectors were seated "behind the counter, in close proximity to the glasses and bottles, the calls for which were quite as frequent as the votes."

Since most citizens knew neither Constitution nor candidates, their judgment was limited. A candidate named Fair received a number of votes on the strength of his auspicious name. Another lost about twenty votes for having previously appeared on the river wearing a stovepipe hat. Admitted one voter:

"When I left home I was determined to go it blind. I went it blind in coming to California, and I'm not going to stop now. I voted for the Constitution, and I've never seen the Constitution. I voted for all the candidates, and I don't know a damned one of them. I'm going it blind all through, I am."

Mokelumne's unanimous vote in favor of the Constitution was representative of the California balloting. As it happened, the 1849 Constitution has been recognized as one of the most admirable documents of its kind.

ACES UP! This gambler's spirit was characteristic of miners in the Mokelumne-Jackson region, if not in the whole Mother Lode. Where the ground was so rich that a man could dig a new fortune any time he chose, why take anything seriously? "If a person lost his all," observed Bayard Taylor, "he was quite indifferent." Two weeks' hard labor would put him back on his feet. One man dug a hole for two days without finding a trace of gold. When he abandoned it, another took over and earned $800 in a single day. Undaunted, the first miner then borrowed $80 and started a boarding-house, selling out a few days later for $1,200.

In Mok Hill, a Negro miner arrived and asked some of the boys where to dig. They pointed out, by way of a practical joke, a hill that had already been combed over and pronounced barren. A week later he was back on the street, loaded down with gold. And the boys promptly stampeded to their "barren" hill.

The same thing happened to three young Germans in Jackson. They were directed to some mine tailings—rock that had already been worked over. Within a few days they had earned $700, having dug down through the tailing to a rich vein beneath.

These chance strikes, according to an early Mok Hill citizen, were not the exceptions. The reason so many miners failed, he insisted, was that they were trying to go by some sensible geologic theory. Such men "would be baffled at every turn," for the irregular distribution of mineral in the Mother Lode defied geology. One miner named Clarke was famed for his rich discoveries. He once fell down a steep hill, got to poking around at the bottom with his knife, and made a million-dollar strike. The secret of Clarke's success, concluded the Mokelumne chronicler, "was that he had no theory. . . ."

SNAKEYES! With such diggings under foot, most miners fell easy prey to the gambling tables of Mok Hill and Jackson. If they lost their pile on Saturday night, they could dig another next week. It also made them connoisseurs of the most expensive food and drink. "It was no unusual thing," reported Bayard Taylor, "to see a company of these men, who had never before had a thought of luxury beyond a good beefsteak and a glass of whiskey, drinking their champagne at ten dollars a bottle, and eating their tongue and sardines, or warming in the smoky camp-kettle their tin canisters of turtle soup and lobster salad."

Such epicurean tastes were especially costly in a land where prices were topsy-turvy. At the "Brandy and Sugar" Hotel in Jackson, a slice of bread was $1.00. Buttered, $2.00. In Mokelumne, board for mules was comparable: barley was $1 a quart and grass $1 a handful.

Prices like these are the chief reason why many, if not most, of the fortunes made in the Gold Rush came not from mining, but from trading. In 1849, a man named Fash so succeeded in cornering the commerce of Mokelumne Hill that the camp acquired the nickname, "Fashville." His operation of the only store in camp and the only mule team from the outside world was merely the beginning of his accomplishments. One of Fash's most lucrative assets was a big sheet-iron stove, on which a miner could cook any item at a $1.00 fee. Fash's specialty was apple pie, which sold fast at $2.00 each. One day he ran out of apples, but having a heavy stock of beans on hand, produced a bean pie and sold it as a "novel and delicate luxury." Poker games were the fashion at Fash's place, subject to the house rule that whenever somebody won a pot with four-of-a-kind, he had to order drinks for everybody. Fash's muleteers brought in Mok Hill mail as a free service, until he hung out a new sign: "Fash's Letter Express." After that, letters were $2.00 apiece.

The Hillites, as they were called, might overlook such business tactics, but the mining profession had strict moral rules. One of these was that no man could mine his claim with slave labor. Near Mokelumne Hill a Chilean named Dr. Concha was working his mine with a force of peons; what was more, he staked a number of claims in their names. This did not please the American miners, who may also be suspected of opposing Chilean miners in general. When the report reached Mokelumne Hill that Dr. Concha's men had driven a party of Americans off some rich ground, the trouble exploded into the "Chilean War."

BATTLE! The American miners met on "the Hill" and passed a resolution banishing Chileans from the diggings. Dr. Concha in turn went down to Stockton and secured a warrant for the arrest of the Americans. Some sixty of his men marched into

Mok Hill in December 1849, killed two miners and made off with thirteen prisoners. At this, the Mokelumne miners rose in arms, and a company of Rangers was hurriedly sent from Stockton.

But before the night was over the prisoners had struggled free and captured the Chilean band. The new captives were brought into Mokelumne for trial; three were hanged and others given lesser punishment. The Chilean War was over, but the resentment it kindled reached from California to South America.

Jackson was not to be outdone by Mokelumne's racial clash. In the earliest days its French population was so large that street signs were written both in French and English. Nearby, a group of Frenchmen were working an exceedingly rich claim. When some American miners tried to seize the property, the French dug in for a fight and planted a Tricolor banner in their midst. At this provocation, several hundred Yankee miners assembled and stormed the fort, carrying off a fortune in high-grade ore. The whole act of piracy went unpunished, and was soon dignified with the name "French War" — another monument to the primitive side of Gold Rush California.

But both Jackson and Mok Hill had their refinements. Late in 1851 the Hillites established a theatre—complete with candles for footlights and genteel-looking miners for the female roles. One young actor was particularly eager to show his talents at heavy tragedy, and was given the lead in Richard III. But the Mok Hill boys took the role less seriously. When the distraught Richard rushed to the front of the stage, sank to his knee and shouted, "My kingdom for a horse!"—a Mexican burro that had been smuggled under the stage answered with a fearful braying. In the confusion, a stagehand raised the footlights and a candle caught Richard in the nose. While the house roared, the outraged king rushed from the scene and his talents were lost forever to the tragic stage.

Such was the riotous spirit of Mok Hill and Jackson in the Golden Fifties. Mokelumne, a thriving camp when Jackson was still unborn, now remains as a near-ghost town on Highway 49. But Jackson, spurred by the development of such famous mines as the Argonaut and the Kennedy, outlived its rival and stands today as one of the busiest towns in the Mother Lode. And tempers have cooled since the days when county seats were won by the town with the fastest buckboard.

CALAVERAS

Jumping Frog Country

ONE SPOT in the heart of the Southern Mines is general headquarters for California folklore —from Joaquin Murrieta and Black Bart to Bret Harte and Mark Twain. Here lie the twin capitals of the Jumping Frog Country, Angel's Camp and San Andreas.

Mark Twain's Jumping Frog story is not one of his best pieces. It is amusing, but carries little of his uproarious fun. The author himself later called it "a villainous backwoods sketch." But this six-page story (laboring under the title of *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*) literally made Mark Twain famous. And it also immortalized its patron town, Angel's Camp.

But, both Angel's Camp and San Andreas were flourishing Mother Lode towns before Mark Twain and Bret Harte came along. First mined in the spring of 1848, the Calaveras country was one of the richest in the Sierras. One early miner at Angel's averaged $288 a day for the first two months. Another shot a ramrod out of his gun, and when he pulled it out of the roots of a manzanita bush, a piece of gold-bearing quartz came up, too. In the next three days he took nearly $10,000 worth of gold from the spot. Money was so easy that one Calaveras miner, when offered the "beggerly sum" of three dollars for his pistol, indignantly scattered the gold dust in the street.

It was not from spotless virtue that the roaring camp of Angel's got its name. Its founder was George Angel, who had come to California as a soldier during the Mexican War. When news of the gold strike at Sutter's Mill reached Monterey, he was one of some ninety men who struck out for the Sierras. They reached Calaveras Creek in May, 1848, and Angel himself built a trading post on what came to be called Angel's Creek. Within a year the hills at Angel's Camp were "dotted with tents," in the words of one observer, "and the creeks filled with human beings to such a degree that it seemed as if a day's work of the mass would not leave a stone unturned in them." Four years later the population reached 4500, and Angel's was one of the hubs of the Mother Lode.

RACIAL PROBLEMS. Meanwhile, the rival camp of San Andreas had sprung up a few miles away. Founded in 1848 by Mexican prospectors, it was one of the earliest to suffer from the racial clashes

which rocked the Mother Lode. When the richness of San Andreas became known, American miners poured in and drove many of the Mexicans out. At least one of the San Andreas victims, according to legend, struck back.

The story goes that Joaquin Murrieta was living near town when a gang of Americans descended on his place. They hung his brother for a crime he didn't commit, ravished his sweetheart and horsewhipped Joaquin for good measure. Swearing vengeance, the proud youth took the outlaw trail and formed a band of cut-throats to prey on American settlements up and down the Mother Lode. All of the twenty-one murderers of his brother were brought to justice—nineteen by Joaquin's own hand. Between 1851 and '53 he was in and out of nearly every camp in the Southern mines, robbing where he chose, laughing at the law, taking from the rich and giving to the poor—all in true Robin Hood tradition.

At least this is the version first set down by John Rollin Ridge, a newspaperman with an imagination. In 1854 he published a life of the famous California bandit, Joaquin Murrieta. It was so good that the California *Police Gazette* ran a similar account in serial form five years later. The tale was re-varnished in a new book by Walter Noble Burns in 1932 and brought to the screen with Warner Baxter in the leading role—both under the title, *Robin Hood of El Dorado.*

The only trouble is that the single historical fact known about Joaquin Murrieta is his death—and, even here, there is reasonable doubt that it was the right Joaquin. By 1853 American outrages against Mexicans in the gold camps had brought widespread retaliation. The state Legislature raised a company of Rangers under the command of one Captain Harry Love, and charged them with pursuing and capturing "the five Joaquins." The reward for this somewhat vague assignment was $1000.

ROUNDUP TIME. Now there were several bandits named Joaquin terrorizing the state—including Joaquin Murrieta. The Rangers chased one band of Mexicans to Panoche Pass, near southern San Joaquin Valley. They came back with the head of Joaquin Murrieta and the hand of his "blood-thirsty lieutenant," Three-fingered Jack, preserved in brandy. But a lot of people who claimed to have known Murrieta stoutly maintained that this wasn't the man. What really happened to him—and to the other four Joaquins—is still a mystery. It is no mystery that the Rangers got the $1000 reward, and an extra $5000 from a grateful, if gullible, Legislature.

On far more solid ground stands the story of Black Bart, in whom San Andreas takes a proprietary interest. It was the scene of his trial and conviction. When it came to pure robbery, both in quantity and quality, Black Bart was assuredly the prince of California bandits. To be sure, he was somewhat late getting started; Bart robbed his first stage in 1875. But for the next eight years, armed only with a shotgun and a stern voice, this bold highwayman stopped no less than twenty-eight stages.

Bart was no ordinary ruffian. He planned and executed his robberies with careful research and admirable finesse. He always worked alone, though he sometimes mounted a battery of broomsticks over a rock beside the road to impress stagedrivers with his imaginary confederates. He always left the passengers alone, and on one occasion is supposed to have returned to an excited lady her proffered purse.

Bart ranged as far North as the Oregon border, but it was the stage drivers of the gold country who most often heard his stentorian command, "Throw down that box!" He left no clues, except in two early robberies when he placed a tantalizing bit of poetry in the empty Wells Fargo chest, signed by "Black Bart, the PO8." Two stanzas gave a hint of Bart's character, but not his identity:

"I've labored long and hard for bread
for honor and for riches
But on my corns too long yove tred
You fine haired—— — ————
Let come what will I'll try it on
My condition cant be worse
and if thers money in that Box
Tis munny in my purse."

By the time this colorful scoundrel had perpetrated twenty-seven succesful holdups, he had California sheriffs, Wells Fargo detectives and the U. S. Postal authorities in a high lather. But every enterprise has its bad days, especially highway robbery. On November 3, 1883, the Sonora stage rolled Westward toward the Calaveras town of Copperopolis. At the bottom of Funk Hill the lone passenger, a young boy with a rifle, got out to do some hunting; the driver agreed to pick him up on the other side of the hill. As the laboring team neared the top, out sprang Black Bart with leveled shotgun.

This time he ran into trouble. The Wells Fargo chest was bolted to the floor of the coach. To gain time in opening it, Bart ordered the driver to take the horses on over the hill out of sight. But there the driver came upon the boy and his gun. He came back over the hill just as Bart was making off with the loot, sent him a volley of three shots and hit him.

The wounded Bart escaped, but in the confusion he left behind a handkerchief—with its tell-tale laundry mark. Wells Fargo detectives traced it to the apartment of Charles Bolton, San Francisco. There they arrested a dapper little man who had been leading a double life as San Francisco boulevardier and Mother Lode stage robber. Those fine haired ——— ————, whoever they were, had the last laugh, after all.

UNCOMMONLY POLITE. Black Bart was taken to San Andreas, seat of Calaveras County, and tried for his last holdup. It was the biggest excitement in the town since the first gold rush. The trial was cut short when Bart pleaded guilty, but he tried to make up for that by delivering a long courtroom speech. The outlaw served a few years at San Quentin, and then faded from history. It was small punishment for twenty-eight robberies, but then Bart had never fired a shot. Besides, he had been uncommonly polite.

But in perspective, the Black Bart incident was only an echo of a riotous San Andreas which had hit its stride thirty years before. It was in the early 1850s that the Calaveras camps were booming. One San Andreas visitor of 1852 reported three gambling houses going full blast to the tune of Mexican bands playing guitars, flutes, and harps. You could hear all three at once, he added, "and as each played a different tune, the effect, as may be supposed, was very pleasing."

TOUGH NEIGHBOR. If San Andreas was wild,

Angel's Camp could be downright tough. In 1856 one citizen killed another for calling him a "hog stealer." The people of Angel's thought such punishment was a little too severe. They felt so strongly about it that during the culprit's trial they threatened to take him from the court and hang him. The judge, thereupon, sent to San Andreas for help. Soon after, a man rushed into the courtroom and told the assembled miners that a sheriff's posse was coming to protect the prisoner.

This was their cue. Instantly the lights were doused, officers of the court were seized, and the prisoner was hustled to the closest tree. The sheriff arrived too late.

But, if this was Angel's Camp at its grimmest, most of its tradition is in the lighter vein. For this is the real Bret Harte-Mark Twain country of the Sierra. It was in the area from Angel's Camp south to Table Mountain that Harte spent two months on the Mother Lode in 1855. Here most of his identifiable short story settings were laid, and here alone does he show any familiarity with gold country geography. In this Calaveras country that chivalrous old reprobate, Colonel Starbottle, held forth. And in Angel's itself were laid such stories as *Mrs. Skaggs' Husband* and *The Bell Ringer of Angel's.*

Still, Bret Harte arrived too late to capture the gold rush spirit in his Mother Lode stories. As one critic puts it, "The flavor of decay hangs about his mining towns; they are just the places which he might have seen in Calaveras in 1855."

Even later came Mark Twain, who described the Angel's of 1865 as a "decayed mining camp." True, he got a poor first impression from boarding a week at the local French restaurant, which served a straight fare of chili beans and "bad, weak coffee" for every meal. On the first day Twain's companion, Jim Gillis, called the waiter and told him he had made a mistake. They had ordered coffee. "This is day-before-yesterday's dishwater," he explained.

A few days later Mark Twain made a momentous entry in his notebook: "Coleman with his jumping frog—bet a stranger $50—Stranger had no frog and C. got him one:—In the meantime stranger filled C's frog full of shot and he couldn't jump. The stranger's frog won." Coleman later became Jim Smiley, and this fragmentary anecdote—probably related by the bartender at the Angel's Hotel—became Mark Twain's first famous story, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County.*

First published in *Clapp's Saturday Press,* it was reprinted across the country and even translated into French. This latter effort dealt such a horrifying blow to the picturesque Western dialect of the *Jumping Frog* that Mark Twain later retaliated by translating it literally back into English. Such phrases as, "Well, I don't see no p'ints about that frog that's any better'n any other frog," became, "Eh bien! I no saw not that that frog had nothing of better than each frog." This, said Twain, was sheer martyrdom.

Angel's Camp has been kinder to the *Jumping Frog.* Each spring it honors Mark Twain, his story and the Gold Rush days in general with a three-day festival climaxed by a Jumping Frog contest—one of the biggest community celebrations in California.

COLUMBIA

Gem of the Southern Mines

EVEN IN THE Gold Rush, Columbia held a special place in California's heart. With her red brick face, wrought iron trimmings and myriad shade trees, she was the gaudy showplace of the Mother Lode. To the boys she was like a beautiful, if slightly tarnished, woman—the toast of the mines.

A century has not dimmed Columbia's reputation. Though the throbbing life which once surged through her streets is gone, she is today the ghost town supreme to Californians. Since 1945, when the crumbled camp was made a historical state park, they have been restoring her faded charm as a monument to California's golden era.

Columbia was not quite a Forty-niner camp. Nearby Sonora was born in the summer of 1848, but two winters passed before prospectors struck the Columbia treasure. On March 27, 1850, a party headed by Dr. Thaddeus Hildreth found gold in a dry gulch; in the next two days they took out thirty pounds of gold (worth some $4680) and started one of the biggest stampedes of the Gold Rush. Since the discovery spot lay in the heart of the teeming Southern Mines, it mushroomed overnight. Within a month, according to reports, population jumped from zero to 5,000—one of the most tumultuous rushes on record.

BOOM TOWN. Out of this explosive beginning sprang a town which astounded California with its headlong growth. By 1852 she still wore a board-and-canvas look, but she contained no less than four banks, three express offices, eight hotels, a daguerreotype parlor, seventeen general stores, two fire companies, no less than forty saloons, numerous fandango houses, forty-three faro tables with a combined capital approaching $2 million—and withal such badly-needed institutions as three churches, a Sunday school, two bookstores, a temperance group and a choral society. Outside communication was provided by pony riders of the "Chain Lightning Express," covering the miles from Knight's Ferry in the less-than-lightning time of three hours. Eight stages brought passengers from the nearest connection at Sonora. And in the height of the boom, the four miles between the twin cities was solidly lined with miners' shanties.

"REFINED" ATMOSPHERE. For all her roughness, Columbia believed in culture. She had three theaters, including a Chinese version with forty Oriental actors. Most elaborate was the Exchange, where Edwin Booth played Richard III. In this festooned emporium, its stage decorated by a pine sapling growing up through the boards, William and Caroline Chapman delighted Columbia audiences night after night. The whooping miners flung gold purses to the players on opening night until the stage was literally covered; threw so much silver coinage on succeeding nights that they created a shortage in

town for several months; and finally escorted the Chapmans in triumph to their next engagement in Sonora.

Irrepressible Columbia never did things half-way. When word reached camp that the first woman was arriving, the boys dropped their shovels, decorated Main Street with arches, took the brass band and marched down to Sonora several thousand strong to provide an escort. Like other Sierra camps, Columbia put decent women on a marble pedestal. Word got around that Big Annie, a notorious madame, had pushed the town schoolmarm into the street. The outraged fire boys dragged their machine to Annie's place and washed the old girl out of the building. Columbia chivalry could do no more.

The town's first chance for a big celebration came on Independence Day, 1851. Sonora, still the metropolis of the Southern Mines, had just been laid waste by fire, and all of Tuolumne County gathered at Columbia for the Fourth. The town seized the opportunity with fervor. From every roof waved the stars and stripes, with others hung across Main Street. There was, according to one eye-witness, "a continual discharge of revolvers, and a vast expenditure of powder and squids and crackers, together with an unlimited consumption of brandy."

GRAND MARCH. But this was merely the informal phase of celebration. The official event was launched with a grand parade consisting of: the Columbia brass band; the teachers and pupils of the town school, who sang hymns whenever the musicians "had blown themselves out of breath"; 100 or more Masons in full regalia; a long cavalcade of horsemen, including "whoever could get a four-legged animal to carry him," with "horses, mules and jackasses" thrown in together; a hook-and-ladder brigade; several hundred miners walking in pairs, each dragging a wheelbarrow containing pick, shovel, frying pan, coffee-pot and tin cup—symbols of mining life; and finally another gang pulling a long tom on wheels, while several pretended to be operating it with much flourish of shovels. All of this was greeted with shouting, cheering and cat-calling from the sidelines.

The whole procession wound up at the town arena, which usually served for bull-and-bear fights. Here, while the band appropriately played "Hail, Columbia," the celebrants took their seats for the solemn program, consisting of the reading of the Declaration of Independence and the Fourth of July oration. This was delivered in rousing fashion by Tuolumne County's rising politician, James W. Coffroth, whom an observer described as "a pale-faced, chubby-cheeked young gentleman, with very white and extensive shirt-collars." The fledgeling spellbinder covered everything from Plymouth Rock to George III, until his restless audience raised some very unceremonious shouts—"Gaas, gaas!" Then, after Columbia's chorus of dinner bells had called the boys to a meal, the festivities were capped by the Latin touch—a bull fight.

It would take more than a crowd's insult to down James Wood Coffroth, a man of unbounded optimism, good cheer and personal ambition. Known as "Columbia's favorite son," he was described as the "jolliest, freest, readiest man that ever faced a California audience . . . the typical politician of early-day California."

POETIC EDITOR. Arriving in the mines the previous year at the age of twenty-one, Coffroth had

applied for work at the Sonora *Herald* office with the modest acknowledgement that he was a "Philadelphia editor." They had him busy writing poetry and editorials, both of which he finished off with fantastic rhetoric. It was he who coined the remarkable line which his critics said was a self-portrait: "With tones auriferous wake the Heavenly Lyre!" Finally several irate gamblers invaded the *Herald* office on a question of editorial policy, and one of the bullets barely missed the editorial writer. Coffroth took up law.

By the end of '51 young Coffroth had settled in the booming Columbia camp, a promising attorney with an impromptu legal education. He quickly got himself elected to the state Assembly, then to the Senate. His rise was not hindered by a fine flair for publicity. In 1855 he challenged a man to a duel for slandering his character to a lady and "interference in my private affairs"; the other refused, but Coffroth got his satisfaction in the liberal amounts of free newspaper space. Yet it was said of him that he "never had a personal enemy," and his easy-going humor was famous. When he was boomed for governor, Coffroth said that his reason for running was that he wanted to pardon his many friends in the state prison.

KING MAKER. Coffroth had no intention of letting all this personal talent go to waste. He threw it into the stream of Columbia history whenever occasion offered. His first opportunity to sway events came when a knifing scrape stirred Columbia in November, 1853. Pete Nicholas, an Austrian miner, had drunk himself into a fighting mood when he encountered John Parote, a citizen of nearby Pine Log, in a Main Street store.

"I say, mister, what's your name?" John Parote tried to ignore him.

"Well, then, where do you live?"

Still Parote shunned him, but Pete became more insistent. Finally the harassed party acknowledged that he was an Irishman. "Does that suit you?"

"No, it don't!"

Pete grabbed Parote, who tried to struggle free; he struck his assailant and fell back over a sugar sack, pulling Nicholas with him. Pete produced a knife and stabbed his victim.

"I am struck!" yelled Parote, and fell back un-

conscious. Pete was arrested and held prisoner to await trial.

This episode was a familiar story in rough-and-tumble Columbia, but now her citizens decided it was too familiar. Besides, the men of Pine Log marched into town ready to wreak justice in the name of their friend, Parote. Next morning Columbia calmly ate breakfast and then proceeded to drag Pete from the care of the town constable and down the street to a waiting tree. Just as the victim was about to be swung off his feet, the constable and his deputy climbed into the tree to cut the rope. Under their weight the limb broke, dropping everything to the ground. The crowd was equally determined, and brushing aside the officer, took the helpless prisoner to another tree.

At this timely moment appeared James Coffroth. Nicholas was his friend, and he hoped to stall the mob till the sheriff arrived. Gaining attention, he launched his speech. He was, said Coffroth, also anxious that justice be done. The murderer ought to be hanged—at this the boys nodded agreement.

"But for the everlasting honor of our glorious republic," added the speaker, "let all things be done decently and in order. . . . As a matter of course Nicholas will be hanged. . . . But for the credit of Columbia give the man a trial."

Coffroth's strategy worked. Before he had finished the sheriff arrived from Sonora, moved through the crowd organizing his deputies, and finally addressed the boys.

"Gentlemen, you will excuse me, but this man is going to the Sonora jail, there to await his trial by law. I am going to take him there."

The gentlemen thought differently, and swarmed forward to grab the prisoner. But the sheriff's deputies held firm, and the mob was stopped at last. While the angry men cursed Coffroth and the sheriff, Nicholas was hauled off to Sonora. The following February he was tried and sentenced to hang. It looked as though Coffroth's promise would be fulfilled.

LOCAL POLITICS. But Tuolumne County reckoned without the cunning of Pete's lawyer. In '54 the entire state was absorbed in the problem of choosing a permanent state capital. The legislature at Benicia was flooded with petitions from San Jose, Sacramento and other towns scrambling for the honor. Not to be outdone, the boys of Pine Log got up a petition to make their camp the state capital and circulated it throughout the county. After it haid gained 10,000 signatures, Pete's lawyer saw it on a store counter in Columbia one day and quietly stuffed it in his pocket. Back in his office, he tore off the original heading and substituted a plea for commutation of Pete's death sentence. Then he sent it off by pony rider to Governor John Bigler at Benicia.

Mr. Bigler had never heard of Pete Nicholas, but he did recognize 10,000 votes when he saw them. He didn't know that some of the very names on the petition were those of the men who had helped fix the noose around Pete's neck. Any man who had the confidence of 10,000 neighbors, he decided, couldn't be all bad. The governor commuted Pete's sentence to ten years' imprisonment—a term which was later reduced to four.

Columbia was cheated of justice, but she went along with the joke. In fact, she embellished it into an even more fantastic legend which still persists in California. Columbia, it is solemnly declared on a Main Street historical marker, missed becoming the state capital by two votes.

As the decade of the '50s faded, so did Columbia's golden treasure. Shouldering pick and blankets, the boys answered the call of richer stakes. By 1867 an observer reported "almost total desertion" of the once fabulous town.

MARIPOSA

Mother Lode Outpost

THERE IS NOTHING ghostly about the Mother Lode town of Mariposa. American tourists passing through it on the road to Yosemite are unaware that this was a flourishing camp before white men entered the famous valley. For Mariposa today is a community of neon signs and automobiles and busy stores. Ghost towns, perhaps, at nearby Hornitos, Mt. Bullion and Bear Valley—but not Mariposa.

From the beginning this locality has dared to be different. Situated at the extreme southern end of the Mother Lode, it was one of the few camps founded on a Spanish rancho. Its original county was the biggest in California. And it was here that miners first abandoned placer mining in the stream beds and struck pick in the actual Mother Lode.

The big man of old Mariposa was that California immortal, John C. Fremont. After playing his part in the conquest of the territory during the Mexican War, Fremont decided to settle down near San Francisco Bay. In 1947 he sent $3000 to the American consul and asked that he buy a certain ranch near San Jose. What he got was the Mariposa grant—a mammoth tract of 45,000 acres in what was then a wild and worthless region. Fremont angrily demanded either the San Jose ranch or his $3000. He got neither.

Two years later, Fremont's cast-off rancho turned out to be the richest one in California. The tumultuous wave of fortune-seekers which descended on the Mother Lode in the spring of 1849 spread as far south as Mariposa Rancho—and found placer gold. In August prospectors uncovered the fabulous Mariposa vein—a section of the vast Mother Lode—and began hard rock mining.

CHANGED MAN. Fremont complained no more. Next month he was in San Francisco waving rock samples and boasting of Mariposa's treasure.

This was exciting news for gold-mad Californians. The unknown quartz ledge which they knew had yielded the rich gravel of Sierra streams had now been discovered! A bigger quartz strike was soon to be made at Grass Valley in the Northern Mines, but this was Mariposa's hour.

Down to this southernmost outpost came the gold

hunters—afoot, horseback, or by wagon and team. From San Francisco they took steamer for Stockton on the San Joaquin, then pushed on by trail for Mariposa. From the mines they passed through Angel's Camp and Sonora, crossed the Tuolumne and Merced Rivers to reach the diggings.

By February, 1850, Mariposa still consisted of one trading post and a ravine pocked with miners' holes. But within a few weeks the first quartz mill arrived, followed by a motley caravan of wagons, mules, and some fifty new citizens—miners, storekeepers, mechanics, and gamblers. Here were the makings of a California town. In the party was a surveyor, who promptly laid out the lots and streets. Soon canvas shanties were being supplanted by frame buildings, and as one early arrival reported, "miners, packers, and teamsters were coming in constantly."

It made no difference that this was Fremont's land. The new Mariposans founded their town on that frontier institution, "squatter's rights." But Fremont was less worried about the townsite than the mining claims. Since his rancho was one of those "floating grants" without definite boundaries, gold seekers were freely staking out ground and claiming that it was outside Fremont's territory. They charged instead that Fremont arbitrarily extended his borders to cover every new strike. It was the one big point at which Spanish titles clashed with the Gold Rush.

GET OUT! Mariposa's ore was so rich that claim-jumping had been a favorite pastime from the start. Around March, 1850, a party of Missourians drove ox teams into Mariposa flat, took up claims on the creek, and seized the property of the nearest neighbors. The victims then went upstream and secured the services of the newly-elected peace officer—a tall and robust Kentuckian. He first went down and tried to reason with the claim-jumpers, who defied him in appropriate language.

Next morning the Kentuckian was back—this time with ninety armed miners anxious for excitement. Before he could restrain them, they jumped into the holes and threw the Missourians' tools across the flat. Then, while the officer tried to calm them, they told the interlopers to get out of camp or see all their equipment wrecked. With mighty oaths the Missourians yoked up their animals and drove off. Justice in the California mines was sometimes crude, but usually effective.

WAR DRUMS. Meanwhile, Mariposa was stricken with worse troubles than claim-jumping. Rumors reached the settlement that Indians of the Sierra foothills were planning to drive out the American intruders. One of the leaders at Mariposa was James D. Savage, who operated trading posts on Mariposa Creek and the Fresno River. On a trip to San Francisco he took with him an Indian chief, in order to impress him with the strength of the whites and the folly of attacking them. When they returned, Savage found the Indians already on the warpath. A party of whites had been murdered near Mariposa. Other Argonauts were forced to pay tribute in order to pass through unmolested. Savage hurriedly called a conference of Indians in front of his store and warned them of the dreadful consquences of a war on the Americans.

"A chief who has returned with me," he concluded, "from the place where the white men are so numerous can tell you that what I have said is true."

But the chief's part was unrehearsed. He stepped up and astonished Savage by telling his tribesmen that if they would unite in a war, "all the gold diggers could be driven from the country." At this the Indians gathered around in ready approval while one chief solemnly pronounced, "My people are now ready to begin a war against the white gold diggers."

Savage could hardly take time to kick himself for his blunder. He pulled out of Mariposa with a warning to the miners of imminent attack. In quick succession the Indians pillaged his Fresno River store and two other Mariposa County trading posts.

Hurriedly the Americans formed a company and retaliated by surprising a large Indian village near the North Fork of the San Joaquin. While the victims ran out of their burning wigwams, the Americans shot twenty-four of them, including the chief. With this merciless blow, the shooting phase of the Mariposa Indian War was ended.

But meanwhile the whole state feared a general Indian uprising. The governor called for a volunteer militia to take the field, and most of the men in Mariposa County joined up. Electing James Savage as their major, they formed the famous Mariposa Battalion. Early in 1851 Savage led his men through winter snows to track down the remaining tribes and make an enforced peace. They rounded up the Indians, but they also penetrated far enough into the Sierras to find a breath-taking valley of towering cliffs and magnificent waterfalls. And so the Mariposa Battalion's historic fame lies not so much in its Indian fighting, but in the effective discovery of Yosemite.

BIG WAYS. Safely past its Indian scare, Mariposa flourished. It had already founded its county—one of the original twenty-seven—early in 1850. With characteristic generosity it formed the biggest county in California—everything from Tuolumne County to Los Angeles County, from the summit of the Coast Range to the state's Eastern border. In 1854 it built the picturesque, New England-style courthouse—one of the few frame courthouses on the Mother Lode. Mariposa County has since lost its enormous size by the breaking off of one new county after another, but the old courthouse still serves on.

A few other reminders of Mariposa's early days remain. On the main street stands the brick office of Fremont's company; facing it across the street is the quaint Schlageter Hotel, with its broad wooden balcony. On the hill to the south of town is the old

jail, made of granite blocks from the intrusion which halts the Mother Lode vein two miles south of town.

Mariposa was reckless, but it was never one of California's bad towns. It had its shootings—the first recorded one in March, 1850, when a man stepped out of a saloon with a shotgun, gave both barrels to a passerby, and then escaped to the hills. Its citizens wore revolvers as a matter of course. In 1856 a "Billiard Saloon and Pistol Gallery" advertised that "amateurs and others are invited to try their skill." As late as 1858, a store advertised this typical list of hardware items: "fine cutlery, carpenter's tools; Colt's Revolvers; Bowie Knives; Shot, lead, and Revolver Balls, Powder &c., &c."

Yet Mariposa was comparatively peace-loving. Its one vigilance committee was formed in 1854 not to hang an accused criminal, but to protect one from an infuriated mob. Fifty respected citizens formed the committee, held off the crowd and stayed in session while the law took its course.

Across the Wooden Tracks. The tough reputation for the district goes to Hornitos, West of Mariposa near the Merced River. Hornitos was founded by outcasts who were run out of the neighboring town of Quartzburg for the crime of being Mexicans. They formed their own community at Hornitos, which soon outgrew Quartzburg. Today Hornitos lives on as one of the best preserved ghost towns in the Mother Lode, while Quartzburg is all but forgotten.

In its heyday Hornitos was a wide-open camp whose streets were lined with fandango halls, bars, and gambling dens. One visitor of 1857 was walking past the sidewalk gaming tables when two players flashed knives at each other. The dealer then covered them with his pistol and suggested with evident logic that they could go somewhere else and finish the dispute without interrupting his game. Followed by a crowd, the pair adjourned to a nearby lot and fell upon each other with their knives.

Soon one of them staggered back covered with vicious wounds, tossed down a glass of brandy, and retook his seat at the card table. Despite this show of bravado, he was soon buried with his opponent in what the visitor called "Dead Man's Gulch."

This was Hornitos in the roaring Fifties. Today its turbulent spirit still lingers in the ruins of the old Wells Fargo office, the store where the firm of D. Ghirardelli got its start in 1855, and other buildings of stone and adobe—nearly all with the iron doors and shutters characteristic of Mother Lode towns.

Less well preserved, but equally historic are the ghost camps on the road North of Mariposa—Mt. Bullion, Mt. Ophir, and Bear Valley. This is the true Fremont country. At Bear Valley may still be seen Fremont's "Bear Hotel," his company store, and the ruins of the home to which he brought his wife, Jessie Benton Fremont, and their children in 1858.

Battle Lines. Throughout the Fifties Fremont's mines had been dogged by disputes and litigation, but not until that critical year did the real fireworks begin. Fremont's chief enemy was the Merced Mining Company, which had already forcibly occupied two of his mines. Fremont the citizen was patient enough to carry on the battle for those two mines in the courts. But Fremont the soldier proceeded to fortify his third mine, the famous Pine Tree.

Early on July 9, 1858, more than fifty Merced Company men rode into Bear Valley and descended on Fremont's mine. But this time they looked into the guns of a score of defenders entrenched behind thick stone walls. Fearing to attempt a frontal assault, the attackers surrounded the fort and opened siege. Fremont's miners manned the breastworks; word went through Mariposa County that they "were prepared to die rather than yield a single hair."

This was the celebrated Mariposa War. The county sheriff arrived on the first day, ordered the Merced crowd to disperse, and succeeded only in arresting three men. The *Mariposa Gazette* then deplored this weakness and demanded that the sheriff deputize enough citizens to arrest all the besiegers. "Oh, shame!" cried the indignant editor. "Sheriff, do your duty." As for Fremont, he dispatched a rider with a message to the Governor, and announced heroically, "Outrageous and beyond precedent as this attack is, I will confine myself to the right of self-defence . . . "

Five days the bitter stalemate continued until some five hundred state troops arrived and forced both sides to retire and settle the fight in the courts. This was probably a relief to both the Fremont and Merced forces, and certainly to the county sheriff. So ended the shotless Mariposa War.

Things are quieter in the Mariposa of today. Once famous as the southern anchor of the Mother Lode, Mariposa is now content with reflected glory as the gateway to Yosemite. The call of gold has given way to the more enduring lure of scenic splendor.

The

DESERT CAMPS

The Gold Rush is only the first part of California's mining tradition. At remote spots south and east of the Sierras, the ghostly remains of a dozen other camps lay moldering in the sagebrush—dim monuments to the later, broader era of Western mining. For half a century following the Gold Rush, prospectors combed every corner of the West. From their discoveries sprang new stampedes to Colorado's Pikes Peak, Nevada's Comstock Lode, and countless points from Montana to Arizona.

By the early 1900s the day of the great mining excitements was over. Perhaps there were no new bonanzas to discover. At any rate, the industrial and agricultural West had grown up around the jackass prospector and the mining stock promoter, and left them a vanishing breed.

California's desert camps belong to this epoch—the day of the pack burro and the twenty-mule team, of the bonanza king and the man with sand in his boots and the sun in his eyes.

KERN RIVER CAMPS

A Second Gold Rush

LITTLE REMAINS in the Kern River country to show for the early days of gold. Much of what there is will soon be under water backed up by Isabella Dam, southern anchor in the Central Valley Project. But the sites of the old camps of Keysville and Havilah will still be accessible over bumpy dirt roads for the true California ghost town hunter.

Today the Kern County empire, with its capital at Bakersfield, is made up largely of cotton and oil. But in the gold era the valley was a worthless plain, and population in the thousands inhabited the mountain section of Kern River and its South Fork. For the Kern was really Southern California's first mining rush. In one brief moment it was the biggest mining news in a state which was gloriously and proudly gold-crazy.

It all began in the summer of 1854, when California was suffering the first setback after the high tide of the Gold Rush. The placers were failing, the shift to quartz mining had only begun, and depression was creeping over the state. Southern California, which had boomed as the supplier of beef cattle for the mines, was returning to the pre-Yankee spirit of *poco tiempo*.

At this receptive moment came the cry of gold from Kern River. A party of Argonauts had found it near the junction of the Kern and its South Fork. By August 130 men were on the ground, taking out from $10 to $25 apiece per day. As if this news was not enough, the report passed through the Mother Lode that a Mexican from Kern River had flourished a bag of nuggets on the streets of Mariposa and told his listeners of hills "yellow with outcroppings."

THE SLOW RUSH. A stampede was brewing, but the California miners were leery of wild goose chases. They had already been lured to a mythical Gold Lake in the Sierras, to a chimerical Gold Bluff on the Northern California coast. But Southern California was not hardened to the fever. Instead, her editors seized on Kern River as proof of the mineral wealth which they had long claimed for the neglected South. In December the matter was settled when an Angeleno wrote from Kern River that "there is no doubt of there being a plenty of gold here. . . . The only difficulty is that we have no provisions."

Provisions? L.A.'s merchants saw their signal. Here was the end of Southern California's doldrums. A second Gold Rush—and Los Angeles was to be its San Francisco!

In 1854 there was no wagon road directly North from Los Angeles. This didn't stop the Angelenos. The dynamic Phineas Banning, local stage and freight king, drove a coach out of Los Angeles to prove the route was feasible. The first obstacle was the formidable Fremont Pass, just beyond San Fernando Valley. Here his passengers got out and walked while Banning's horses fought their way to the top. Down the other side plunged a rugged brush-covered gulch at a near-perpendicular angle.

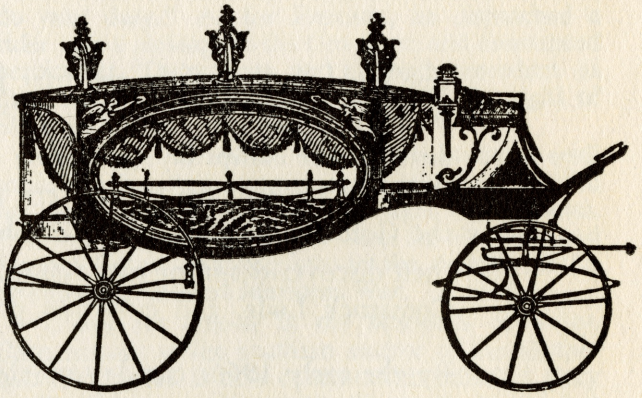
Against the pleas of his comrades, Banning urged his team over the edge with the retort that a driver who couldn't negotiate that hill "should confine himself to ox teaming in the valley." Over they toppled, crashing headlong at the bottom of the pass. Feverishly the passengers scrambled down and pulled Banning from the wreckage.

"Didn't I tell you?" beamed the stageman. "A beautiful descent, far less difficult than I had anticipated."

In this spirit, Los Angeles got through to Kern River. Her merchants raised money to fix the worst spots in a new road which led over Fremont Pass,, up San Francisquito Canyon, past the Army fort at Tejon Pass, and as far as the mouth of Kern River Canyon as it emerges into San Joaquin Valley. From this point a pack trail led through the rugged Kern River gorge for the last thirty miles to the mines. By early February, 1855, Banning was sending regular six-horse stages and ten-mule freight wagons to Kern River. Accompanying them were two express lines and a virtual horde of gold seekers.

For Southern California had now caught the fever. Raising dust through the streets of Santa Barbara, Los Angeles and San Bernardino were miners and storekeepers, wagon trains and pack burros, herds of cattle and bands of sheep.

"Picks, pork, shovels, hard bread and pans are at a premium," wrote a Santa Barbara citizen.



"Our public houses are crowded with strangers," said the Los Angeles *Star*, "although every kind of conveyance is called into requisition to get to the diggings."

"Through the entire distance," observed one Argonaut, "one cannot lose sight of men, teams and cattle."

Northern California kept its head until steamers from the South began bringing news of the mining craze. On February 12 the *Goliah* reached San Francisco with word the miners were making up to $50 per day. Over 2000 men were on the ground and more were on the way from as far as Sonora, Mexico.

The skeptical North could hold itself no longer. Next day the *Goliah* pulled out of San Francisco jammed with rainbow hunters. A party of riders left the Bay the same day by the overland route. By early March river steamers—some of them decked

with huge signs, "Kern River"—were puffing out of Sacramento and other Northern points loaded to the guards. Then they descended on Stockton, head of navigation on the San Joaquin. Into this bustling center—her streets and stores suddenly alive with men — converged steamboats, freight wagons and stagecoaches.

South from Stockton the crowds took a wagon road that entered the Sierras by way of White River and came to an end at Posey Flat. In the last thirty miles over Greenhorn Mountain they pressed on by foot or horseback.

LOCAL RULE. Life in this new Kern country of rocky hills and scrub junipers followed the Mother Lode pattern. At the main settlement of "Forks of the Kern," miners slept in tents, worked all day carrying ore to be washed at the river in their long toms, paid exorbitant prices for food and tools. Living far from ordered society, the miners observed no law but their own consciences. One storekeeper was shot and killed, according to the report, "because he refused to sell a man a pair of pants on credit." When foreign miners—French, Spaniards and Mexicans—arrived, the hostile Americans refused to let them stake out the best ground.

But by early spring it was apparent that nobody was going to gain a fortune on Kern River. Gold was there, though not in quantities which made the trip worthwhile. Denouncing the whole excitement as a Los Angeles promotion scheme, disheartened miners drifted back into the settlements and dampened the Kern River fever. By May only a few hundred men remained where as many as five thousand had crowded in scarcely a month before. One eye-witness summed up the dismal scene: "Provisions, tools, bad whisky and vicious rattlesnakes . . . in all directions."

The Los Angeles papers tried to bolster the gold boom by fairly pleading with the miners to stay on the Kern. "Two or even one dollar per day," said the *Star,* "is far better employment than to come back here and loaf around our grog shops." But it was no use; Southern California's dream of mining glory had vanished. The Kern River "humbug" became a laughing stock in the Northern gold fields. A stray horse wandering through Sacramento had a derisive sign tied to his rear: "Bound for Kern River."

MOVE AHEAD. Still, the Kern country's golden days were not over. A rich ledge which was one of the sources of the gold placers had been discovered in a side ravine by one Captain Richard Keys as early as 1854. Near his Keys Mine grew a rustic frontier town named Keysville, first American community in what is now Kern County. Without formal streets, its rough wooden stores were scattered at random over the shallow hillslope, while miners' cabins dotted the mountainside above. Through the late '50s this was probably the most remote settlement in California—110 miles to the nearest town of Visalia in one direction, 140 miles to Los Angeles in another. Most supplies came in over the Northern route, and were packed over Greenhorn Mountain until 1856. Then the first wagons on the trail from Posey Flat had to follow the ridges and canyon bottoms while one teamster went ahead and chopped down trees with an axe. Teams were doubled going up the steepest mountains, while wagons were held back on the downhill run by dragging trees behind. First wagon to arrive in the Kern mining country was lowered by rope down the mountainside into Keysville. One visitor called it "the hardest wagon road I have ever seen that was much traveled."

WAR! In 1856 this far-off settlement found itself in the midst of an Indian war. The tribes of San Joaquin Valley had taken the warpath, and most of Keysville's able-bodied men rode out to help put down the uprising. Just over Greenhorn Mountain a party of miners killed five Indians in cold blood; the infuriated natives then procliamed war on all the whites in the Southern Sierras—of which Keysville was the chief settlement. Around May 1 its people heard that some five hundred Indians had gathered at the mouth of the Kern for an assault on the town.

Keysville was thrown into panic. With most of her men away, she was left with only sixty defenders. Wielding picks and shovels, they hurriedly dug an earth "fort" on a prominent knoll near the lower edge of town. To the commander of Fort Tejon and the Los Angeles sheriff they sent riders in quest of arms, ammunition and reinforcements.

"We have fortified ourselves and will defend ourselves if they make an appearance," ran one message.

From Fort Tejon came a troop of cavalry, which found no Indians on the Kern, but came on anyway and occupied Keysville. In Los Angeles the citizens held a meeting to raise a rescue company, but before they could act the Indian scare subsided. Keysville never used its earthen fortress, but the eroded outline of the breastworks manned by her riflemen may still be seen by today's visitors.

THE OLD STORY. By 1860 Kern mining was branching out beyond Keysville. A miner bearing the unenviable name of "Lovely" Rogers struck out from Keysville on a prospecting trip and lost his mule. In the tradition of half the mining strikes in the West, he found the animal in a remote canyon, picked up a rock to throw at him, and found it was rich in gold. His discovery led to development of the famed Big Blue mine and the new Kern River town of Quartzburg.

The newest Kern camp grew in wealth and wickedness until the temperance element gained power and turned the town dry. Saloonkeepers thereupon moved a mile down the river and founded their own town—with the obvious name of Whisky Flat. In 1864 the new camp made a concession to respectability by changing its name to Kernville. Through the early 1860s these rival towns were the center of population in the Kern country.

Into this backwoods center in 1864 came the genial showman, Asbury Harpending, a Confederate sympathizer in search of refuge. From Kernville he pushed on with three companions into the Tehachapi Mountains south of the river. In this wild country they made a rich new strike, organized a mining district and named their camp Havilah—after the locality in Genesis "where there is gold."

This pine-shaded camp promptly boomed in the fashion of Kern mining excitements. Men flocked in by the hundreds, town lots sold as high as $20 a front foot, pack trains and stage coaches were arriving regularly from Kernville and Los Angeles.

JOHNNY REBS? From the beginning Havilah was known as a hotbed of secessionists, of whom Harpending later claimed to be the leader. Suspicion

So steady was Cerro Gordo's production that for years the freight wagons were unable to catch up with the furnace output. More teams were put on the road, the teams themselves were augmented with more mules and wagons, but the metal bars kept piling up at the source. In 1872 a small steamboat, the *Bessie Brady,* began hauling the bullion across Owens Lake to speed the process. But this merely transferred the piles from Cerro Gordo to the south shore of the Lake.

During the Bakersfield debacle, 30,000 ingots had accumulated in Owens Valley, and passing miners were building them into temporary cabins. But in 1873 the system was reorganized, new freight stations were erected, and the teams were dispatched on an almost hourly basis like a stage line. Within a few months, using eighty teams of sixteen mules and three wagons each, the freighters cleared the furnace output for the first time.

COMPANY FEUD. Meanwhile, Belshaw had been fighting to keep his iron control of Cerro Gordo. Since 1869 another company had been operating a smelter at Owens Lake on ore brought down from Cerro Gordo. Belshaw's first reaction was to let his toll road fall into such neglect that the Owens Lake Company could scarcely bring enough ore to the furnace. It answered by trying to build another road, but found it impossible to get around the strategic canyon occupied by Belshaw's toll house. Then when it took the issue to the County Supervisors, Belshaw got himself voted a member at the next election.

But there was more than one way to fight the bullion king. Allies of the Owens Lake company bought the San Felipe Mine, which held a conflicting claim to Belshaw's great Union Mine. But he countered by acquiring the San Felipe mortgage, allowed by law, the undersheriff refused to take his money.

Believing himself secure, the bullion king now foreclosing, and buying the property at Sheriff's sale. So great was Belshaw's power in Owens Valley that when a San Felipe man arrived from San Francisco to pay off the indebtedness within the six months told the Owens Lake company that he "owned the whole hill," and ordered it to quit working its mines. The rival outfit then bought into the San Felipe company and financed a lawsuit to claim ownership of Belshaw's property. During the "big trial" in 1873, an armed clash was barely averted when Belshaw's miners halted an inspection of the disputed property by force.

Finally the decision went to the San Felipe group, but Belshaw kept the issue in the courts for over two years until his enemies settled for a minor interest in the Union mine. But by this time the Union's fabulous treasure was failing. In December 1876 Belshaw shut down his furnace, and the following year a severe fire dealt the company a final blow. Cerro Gordo was all but deserted when the last mule team carried a load of bullion down the Yellow Grade in October, 1879.

Since then, more than one new company has tried to strike a new fortune on Buena Vista Peak. Around 1915 a bucket tramway was built to carry ore down the side of the Inyo Range to a narrow gage railroad which had its terminus at Owens Lake. But today Cerro Gordo is a dead camp, with only a few empty buildings remaining to remind visitors of a day when it was L.A.'s Comstock.

PANAMINT

A California Legend

A FEW MINING CAMPS stand out beyond their historical context as part of Western folklore: Bodie, Deadwood, Tombstone, and, not least, Panamint. Two books have been written about this fabulous ghost town: one a novel, *The Parson of Panamint;* the other a history with frank excursions into the unhistoric, *Silver Stampede*. Panamint is a necessary fragment of the California legend.

Yet this camp rose and fell in the slight space of three years. Its population never exceeded 2000. As a mineral producer it was a dead loss. And few Californians have any idea where its ghost is located.

The Panamint of history was the California echo of Nevada's Big Bonanza. In 1873 the West Coast was caught in the frenzy over the new silver strike in the Comstock's Con Virginia and California mines. Their owners, Fair, Mackay, Flood and O'Brien, had suddenly become the Bonanza Kings of Western mining. With wild optimism ruling the day, any new silver discovery was hailed as a potential Comstock.

It was on this crisp tinder that the Panamint spark fell. In January of '73, three prospectors poking through the canyons of the Mojave Desert struck silver in the Panamint Range, the western wall of Death Valley. Rock samples showed astounding values ranging from $300 to $3000 per ton. But the discovery was made at the head of Surprise Canyon in remote Panamint Valley, 200 miles from the coast. To translate this kind of ore into cash required two things: transportation and capital.

For more than a year the first Panaminters spent more energy pursuing these two necessities than in digging silver. Finally in the spring of 1874 they found both. The Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce raised money and built a wagon road to Panamint Valley. Capital was provided by the two Nevada Senators, John P. Jones and William M. Stewart.

THE ENTREPRENEURS. Panamint's name suddenly skyrocketed from the fame of these two investors. Stewart was the leading lawyer on the Comstock, the man who had written the Nevada Constitution and literally fathered the 36th state. Jones was a mine superintendent who had gained fame as hero of the terrible Yellow Jacket fire of 1869. More recently he had won new popularity among Nevada miners by outsmarting the California banking interests which had dominated Comstock finance. Knowing of a rich new lead in the Crown Point Mine, he quietly bought up its mining stock and made himself one of Nevada's silver kings.

When the West Coast heard of the latest interest of these 'Silver Senators," the stampede to Panamint was on. Through the summer and fall of

1874 desert roads were choked with silver seekers bound for Surprise Canyon. By November no less than seven stages a week were carrying the crowds into Panamint from the direction of Virginia City, San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Bernardino.

In the bottom of Surprise Canyon a rude town was rising from the handiest materials—stone shanties, log cabins built of pinon pines and even frame buildings made from lumber hauled in by mule team at $250 per thousand feet. Of the fifty structures that lined the mile-long street, there were six general stores offering goods at prices ranging from $2 per dozen eggs to $200 per ton of hay; at least twelve saloons, led by the Oriental, whose elegant furnishings were advertised as "the finest on the Coast outside of San Francisco;" a Bank of Panamint; a brewery; a meat market (whose wagon also served as the town hearse); and the office of a small but virile newspaper, the Panamint *News*. The sides of the canyon were dotted with the cabins, tents and caves of the miners, but were too steep to permit wheeled traffic. The mule teams, ox trains and stages kept to the main street, which was made livelier by showers of rock from the hills whenever a new blast was set off in the mines.

SHOOTING SEASON. Panamint was just about as far from law and order as a California town could get, and so were her citizens. Among them was Ned Reddy, proprietor of the Independent Saloon, who had already killed two men in Owens Valley, supposedly in self-defense. Owner of the Oriental Saloon was Dave Neagle, who had arrived after a shooting scrape in Pioche, Nevada; later, as bodyguard to Justice Stephen Field, he would put a violent end to the violent career of Judge David S. Terry.

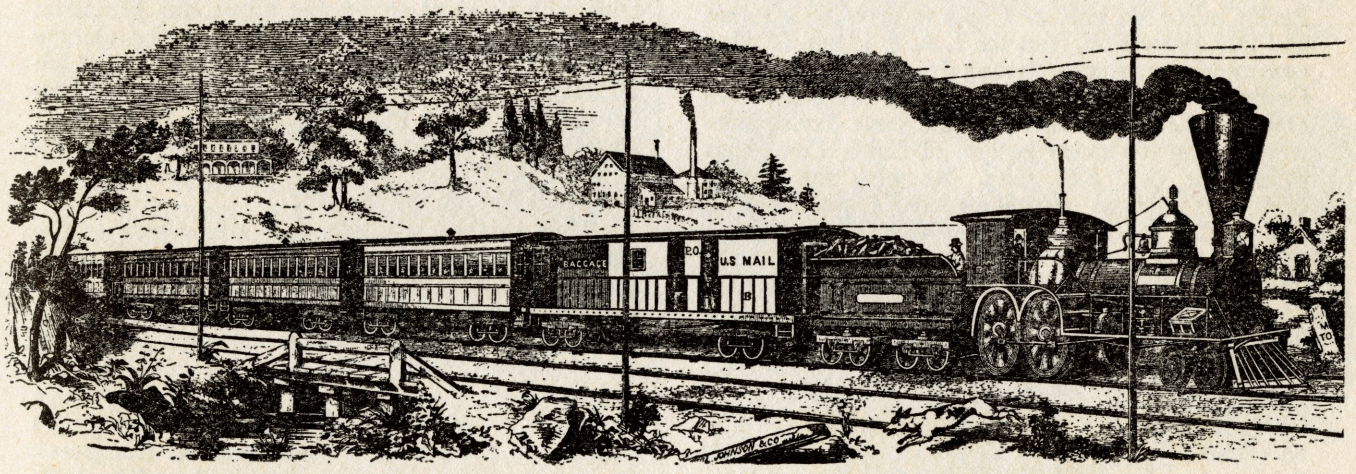
But Panamint's quickest gunman was Jim Bruce, professional gambler. The claim that Panamint's Boot Hill was his private cemetery was not quite fair. But two Panaminters did bite the dust before his ready trigger. One of them burst in on him in the boudoir of one of the camp's madames, and was promptly chastened with lead. Another prospector had a shooting argument with Bruce in front of the Bank of Panamint and came out second best. A witness to this second duel was one of the founding fathers, Senator Stewart, who discreetly took refuge behind a stone wall while bullets swept the main street.

It remained for two Nevada stage robbers, John Small and John McDonald, to bring the Robin Hood element to Panamint. Living in nearby Wildrose Canyon, they swaggered Panamint's streets unmolested by the law. On one occasion they journeyed to Nevada, robbed the Eureka stage and wounded the messenger, then returned to their Panamint hideout with the loot.

It was this outlaw pair that sold Senator Stewart one of his biggest Panamint mines. According to his reminiscences, they hung about while his giant stamp mill was being built, inquiring pointedly when he would begin shipping bullion. Finally on June 29, 1875, the great monster was fired up and the twenty stamps began grinding up the ore. When the first silver bullion was tapped from the smelter, the bad men were on hand, armed with six shooters and sheepish grins.

GREAT BALLS OF SILVER. But the crafty Stewart was ready for them. Out of his smelter rolled silver cannon balls weighing from four to five hundred pounds each. The bandits abruptly lost their smiles.

"Do you think it's right to play that game on *us*?" one of them demanded with injured pride. "And after we sold you the mine, too. Why, we can't haul away one of those boulders!"



It was Stewart's turn to grin.

"You can't expect *me* to be sorry for you, can you?"

So, while the hard-hearted Senator watched, the robbers tried to lift one of the silver pigs. It remained stubbornly in place. Then they got a pack mule and tried to heave the thing on his back. With no stomach for the venture, the animal bucked furiously until the men gave up. What was the use of making off with these impossible objects, anyway? Only Stewart's company could cash them in.

For months Small and McDonald had to suffer the torture of watching these silver balls leaving Panamint regularly by mule team, lurching down Surprise Canyon and across Panamint Valley. Before the cargo could reach Los Angeles and the steamboats which would carry it to the San Francisco mint, it had to traverse 200 miles of lonely desert under no protection but an unarmed driver. But there was nothing Small and McDonald could do about it. The insult was so deflating that on April 20, 1876, they robbed a general store of $2300 and left Panamint for good.

STEAMING UP. But while Stewart was opening production in Panamint, his Senator partner was on the coast rounding out the enterprise on a grand scale. If Panamint was to be another Comstock, it needed a railroad. And so in September, 1874, John P. Jones rode into Los Angeles and put up $220,000 toward a proposed line from tidewater to

the silver country—the Los Angeles and Independence Railroad. Then he visited Santa Monica Bay and bought up three-fourths of the Santa Monica y San Vicente Ranch as a sea-going outlet for his tracks. What was more, Jones contacted the Eastern railroad magnate, Jay Gould, and suggested linking up with his Union Pacific line for a transcontinental connection. Gould agreed informally to meet him halfway, and the Panamint venture became national news.

All this did not suit the Big Four directors of the Southern Pacific—Stanford, Crocker, Huntington and Hopkins. They had their eyes on the Panamint traffic, and were miffed when Jones carefully avoided a connection with their Southern California rails. Worse still would be any linkup which would introduce a competing transcontinental line into California. To the Big Four, such a challenge meant action.

The strategic spot in Jones' master plan was Cajon Pass, where a Los Angeles and Independence survey party had already made preliminary explorations. On January 7, 1875, a band of Southern Pacific men rode into the Cajon to drive their stakes and take possession. But the L.A. & I. had an alert construction engineer—young Joseph U. Crawford. Getting wind of the S.P. move, he took his own crew and headed for the pass the same day. Somewhere along the sandy bottom of Cajon Creek they passed the rival S.P. gang. Knowing the ground from his previous reconnaissance, Crawford rode straight for Toll-gate Canyon—the one spot too narrow for more than one railroad. His men were driving stakes and running lines when the Southern Pacific men arrived. Jones' railroad had won the first round.

Then Huntington of the Southern Pacific tried to stop the upstart railroad with an act of Congress. On January 8 a bill was introduced to give the S.P. an exclusive right-of-way through Cajon Pass. But the Los Angeles people heard of it and deluged Congress with such outraged protest that it dropped the scheme. Huntington soon had to calm his alarmed partners.

"I do not think they will hurt us much," he wrote. "I will ventilate their safe harbor."

SANTA MONICA'S BEGINNING. But Jones had only begun to fight. By April he had started work on his railroad from Santa Monica Bay to Panamint Valley. In July he founded the town of Santa Monica with a grand auction sale of lots. By December the L.A. & I. rails had reached from the bay 14 miles to Los Angeles. And in Cajon Pass his men were digging a tunnel which would give access to the Mojave Desert—and Panamint.

Then things began to happen which deflated Jones' dream. A financial panic swept California and took with it the leading Los Angeles bank, thus hurting stock sales for the L.A. & I. In the accompanying crash of Comstock mining securities, Jones was badly crippled. Then some of the most promising Panamint mines started running out of ore. In the spring of 1876 Jones and Stewart shut down their mill while their miners explored for more raw material. The Panamint venture had suddenly stalled.

Out of Surprise Canyon now trudged a disconsolate horde—miners, stock promoters, merchants with their goods, even the Panamint *News* editor with his hand press and type cases. Nights in Panamint's roaring saloons suddenly went still. Town lots that had sold as high as $1000 could not be given away. By May, 1877, the last company mines were closed and Panamint was a dead camp.

Most of the boys didn't have far to go. Across Panamint Valley and beyond the Argus Range was Darwin, a new silver camp a few miles south of Owens Lake. Discovered in October of '74, its rise was more meteoric than Panamint's. In less than three months the Panamint stage route had been moved to take in the new town, and in ten months Darwin was shipping bullion. With most of her population coming from Panamint, Darwin's nights were never dull. Through 1876 her stages suffered one robbery after another, while her last bright days in 1878 were climaxed with a labor dispute which turned into a general shooting match by all hands.

MOVING ON. The Panamint country was to produce still more mining excitements. Beginning in 1877 the fresh camp of Lookout flourished in the Argus Range. Situated south of Darwin, it was connected by a pack trail over the crest of the mountains with its chief supporting mines, the Minnietta and Modoc (the latter owned by Senator George Hearst, father of publisher William Randolph Hearst). Today's tourists find a remnant of this silver boom in the rock charcoal kilns of Wildrose Canyon in the Panamints, whose product was hauled by mule team across Panamint Valley for the Smelters of the Modoc and Minietta.

Then in the early '90s gold was struck in the canyons south of old Panamint, and the town of Ballarat was born in the floor of the valley. Named for the famed Australian gold center, this camp served for several decades as a hell-roaring oasis for Mojave Desert prospectors.

Today the Panamint country is more accessible than ever. Taking the main road to Death Valley past Trona, the traveler crosses the Slate Range and by way of a short side road, reaches the adobe walls of Ballarat. From here he can drive—by dirt road, of course—up the great alluvial fan at the mouth of Surprise Canyon, and if conditions are favorable, get several miles closer to Panamint City without walking.

Though cloudbursts have left little of the Panamint that was, the camp still displays several stone walls and frame houses, the brick stamp mill and a bucket tramway which furnished it with ore from a leading mine. But the reckless miners who once inhabited these hillsides are replaced by jackrabbits and ground squirrels. And the shouts of revelry that used to burst from saloon doors now find echo only in the rustle of wind through the sagebrush on Main Street.

MAMMOTH

Timberline Treasure

LOST MINES hold a fond place in Western tradition, and California has contributed more than its share. Of these, none has surpassed the famous "Lost Cement Mine," which sent a small army of prospectors combing the Mono country for over two decades. They never fulfilled their quest, but in the process they founded several roaring camps in the High Sierra and opened up a scenic wonderland—Mammoth Lakes.

Like most legends, the story of the Lost Cement Mine has several versions. Mark Twain's account, recorded in *Roughing It,* is as good as any. In the early Fifties three German brothers joined the Gold Rush and reached the Sierra somewhere in the Mono country. While resting in a canyon they found a vein of cement "shot full of lumps of dull yellow metal." It was two-thirds pure gold! Loading themselves with rock samples, they covered up the vein, made a map of the location and struck on again over the mountains. Two of them died on the gruelling trek, and the third reached the Mother Lode settlements so worn out that he never ventured back to find his mine. But he gave his map and the samples to a miner named Whiteman, who journeyed over the mountains and spent the rest of his life searching for the cement mine.

Mark Twain came to Nevada's Esmeralda mines, across the state border from the Mono country, in the early 1860s. In the mining camp of Aurora he got "one accidental glimpse" of Whiteman, who displayed a chunk of cement given him by the German. "Lumps of virgin gold," said Mark, "were as thick in it as raisins in a slice of fruit cake."

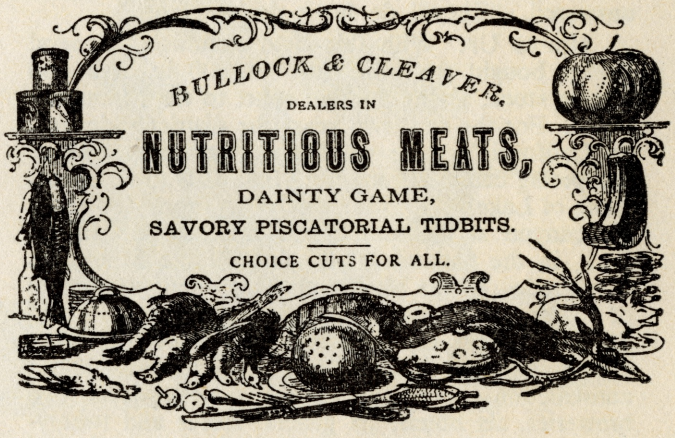
From time to time, word went through town that Whiteman had appeared—in disguise, of course—and the camp would be thrown into a frenzy. The universal object was to follow the miner and his map to the lost mine. Wrote Mark: "I have known it reported at eleven at night, in a large mining-camp, that Whiteman had just passed through, and in two hours the streets, so quiet before, would be swarming with men and animals. Every individual would be trying to be very secret, but yet venturing to whisper to just one neighbor that W. had passed through. And long before daylight—this in the dead of winter—the stampede would be complete, the camp deserted, and the whole population gone chasing after W."

STATE OF MIND. This, if we may believe Mark Twain, was the state of mind in the border country south of Lake Tahoe in the Sixties and Seventies.

One of the first real strikes made in the High Sierra was at Silver Mountain, located east of Ebbett's Pass near the headwaters of the Carson River. This was considerably north of the Mono Country, and the treasure was silver, not gold. But in 1863, when the main discovery was made, the Comstock boom was at its height and California was ready to believe any new silver strike a potential bonanza. Miners from the Mother Lode stampeded over the old Ebbett's Pass emigrant road, paralleling the Stanislaus River. Soon stages began running from the Southern Mines as far as Silver Valley, west of the summit, whence a saddle train carried passengers the remaining miles to Silver Mountain.

"As we descend the canyon from the summit," wrote an early arrival of August, 1863, "suddenly a bright new town bursts into view. There are perhaps forty houses, all new. . . . This log shanty has a sign up, *Variety Store;* the next, a board shanty the size of a hogpen, is *Wholesale & Retail Grocery;* that shanty without a window, with a canvas door, has a large sign of *Law Office;* and so on to the end. . . . Tunnels and drifts are being run, shafts being sunk, and every few minutes the booming sound of a blast comes to the ear like a distant leisurely bombardment."

FEVER HIGH. In these first days the camp was seized with silver fever. Hundreds of miners were



"scampering like a nest of disturbed ants"; mining terms — "lode," "indications," "rich rock" — were heard on all sides; speculation was raging in town lots. "Nearly everyone," observed the visitor, "is, in his belief, in the incipient stage of immense wealth."

Despite such bursting confidence, Silver Mountain never rivaled Virginia City. But together with the neighboring camp of Monitor, it drew enough population to form the new county of Alpine in 1864. By 1875, the county seat had shifted from Silver Mountain to Markleeville, and the old camp was deserted by the mid-Eighties. Today only the crumbling ruins of the old jail mark the site of Silver Mountain, once the biggest town between the Southern Mines and Carson City.

Meanwhile, the legend of the Lost Cement Mine had renewed the tide of settlement in the East Sierra country. Near Mono Lake, where gold had been discovered by a scouting party as early as 1852, the mining town of Monoville sprang up seven years later. From here, as well as from Bodie and Aurora, prospecting parties struck out in quest of the lost mine.

In June, 1877, a group led by James A. Parker discovered a wide ledge of silver-gold ore on Mammoth Mountain east of Lake Mary. According to custom, they announced it as "the largest bonanza outside of Virginia City." By August, a Comstock company had optioned it for $40,000, and before

mountain snows melted in the spring of 1878, had sent in a crew of miners and ordered a 40-stamp mill.

EXCITING TIME. This kind of news sent a miner's heart leaping, and the stampede was on. From the mining camp of Benton, on the route between Owens Valley and Bodie, a wagon road was hurriedly built to the Mammoth mines. Another branch was constructed from Bishop Creek to the lake country by J. L. C. Sherwin, and the famous highway switchbacks over the toughest part of this route are still known as the Sherwin Grade. By April, 1878, an upper Owens Valley resident described the passing traffic: "Men bound for the lake district . . . pass through here daily. Some go afoot, others horseback while a few navigate by vehicles."

One of the earliest to arrive was General George S. Dodge, a noted California mining investor. Owners of one of the mines showed him their property, offered ore samples and quoted assay figures. Dodge sat down on a pine stump in the main street and looked up a thousand feet to the Mammoth outcroppings.

"I don't want to know how rich they are," he answered. "They'll do for a deal anyhow."

HOPES UP. With this bold optimism, General Dodge bought the mine for $30,000 in cash and mining stock, giving another spurt to the Mammoth boom. For the next two years the district rode high on California's wave of mining excitement. Three competing camps sprang up: Pine City, on the east shore of Lake Mary; Mammoth City, sprawled down the canyon at the foot of the mines; and Mineral Park, in the flatlands at the foot of the Mammoth City grade. It was Mammoth which soon won most of the trade and the population. In the spring of 1878, lots were occupied and fenced for a mile up the single street, with at least 20 log houses under construction. By 1879, it had two newspapers, two breweries, six hotels, six general stores and twenty-two saloons. A thousand people had arrived, and town lots of 25-foot frontage were selling at $1500.

In April, 1879, the Mammoth mine reached ore which was said to be "half gold," and excitement raged still higher. Mammoth Mine stock jumped from $3 to $15 a share. Reported one newcomer:

"The main street here is a jam of men and teams coming in from all parts and loaded with every conceivable article."

Travel into this remote camp was by three methods, each from a different direction. Freight arrived by twenty-mule team over a wearisome trek of 220 miles from Mojave, on the Southern Pacific Railroad. Passengers came by a tri-weekly coach from Benton, which connected with stages from Nevada's Carson City, 150 miles away. Californians who cared to rough it by a more direct route could leave the stage at Fresno Flats (now Oakhurst) south of Yosemite, and take the saddle train 55 miles over the ridge of the Sierra. This approach was not recommended for those with bad nerves or a short temper.

WINTER COLD. But for at least four months of the year, Mammoth was completely snowbound. In this grim season most houses were buried in snow, with entry made by burrowing down to the front door. All travel was by skis, which the Mammothites called "snowshoes." There were no horses in camp, and as one resident put it, "we couldn't use them if they were here."

To add to this handicap, Mammoth was dogged with bad luck. In hauling in machinery for the stamp mill, the huge flywheel offered the toughest problem. It was carried by rail from San Francisco to Mojave, then carefully transferred to a twenty-mule team freight wagon. Then for 10 or 12 days it was pulled across the Mojave Desert, through Owens Valley, up the back-breaking Sherwin Grade, past Long Valley and into the Mammoth country.

Finally, the plodding animals reached the last steep grade into Mammoth City. As they labored upward to the tune of cracking blacksnake and jingling chains, wagon and flywheel toppled over the edge of the road and crashed into the canyon below. No amount of straining and swearing could haul the stubborn object back up to the road, and at last report it lay there still.

Mammoth finished its stamp mill—after further delay. But an even bigger problem was getting the ore from the mine down the dizzy 3500-foot decline to the mill. The miners built a trestle, which blew down in the first heavy wind. Next came a chute lined with sheet-iron, but the first carload smashed it to splinters. Then they erected a covered tramway; on the starting ride, the car jumped the track at the first curve and cracked up. The structure was remodeled, but soon a car got out of control on an icy track and almost killed the brakeman. Mule power was installed on a more level section of the route, but another Sierra breeze blew the mule from the track. After that it was reported that mountain storms were slowing production. Apparently the reason was that whenever a wind rose in the canyon the mule laid down until it passed.

CASH OUTLAY. Under such misfortunes, the Mammoth company had spent some $385,000 by early 1880, and had produced an estimated $200,000 in silver and gold. This was less than satisfactory to the stockholders, and the whole works shut down for good. A snowshoe army marched out of Mammoth, and by the spring break-up, the camp was deserted. All that remains today is a log cabin and ruins of the 40-stamp mill.

Even while Mammoth flourished, the Lost Cement Mines were not forgotten. In 1879, gold was discovered near the west end of Lundy Lake, a few miles from Mono Lake. Here sprang the mining camp of Lundy, famous for its timberline mines, snow avalanches and a hilarious newspaper, the *Homer Mining Index.*

The latter was edited by a character known as "Lying Jim Townsend," said to have been the inspiration for Bret Harte's *Truthful James.* He specialized in puffing up the size of the town for the benefit of British mine investors. Lundy was small, even for the Sierra camps, but the *Mining Index* carried ads for two banks, a railroad timetable and writeups of gay first nights at the theater.

But there was nothing imaginary about Lundy's snowslides. Two resolute miners had their cabin burried by avalanches in two successive winters. Six feet of snow fell in Lundy in March, 1882, starting a whole series of slides. One mountain of snow dropped several thousand feet and covered three cabins, whose occupants were later rescued. Another miner lay in bed one night worrying over warnings from friends in town; he rose and started for Lundy, and was scarcely out of the way when a snowslide buried his shack.

BODIE

Badman's Roost

"AS SOON AS the local talent get to thinking they're tough," a Comstock undertaker once complained, "they go try it out in Bodie and Bodie undertakers get the job of burying them."

No doubt about it, Bodie was a bad town. It was gloriously rich; it was remote; and its boom in the late '70s was timed to draw a horde of adventurers from Virginia City and other fading Nevada camps. This combination gave meaning to the standard Western phrase, "Bad man from Bodie." One arrival of 1879 noted six fatal shooting scrapes during his first week in town. The daily *Bodie Standard* of September 5, 1880, mentioned three shootings and two stage holdups — apparently an ordinary day's work. A little girl, whose family was leaving the neighboring town of Aurora for the new camp, ended her nightly prayer with: "Goodbye, God; We're going to Bodie!"

Maybe this bloodthirsty reputation is what makes Bodie the ghost town archetype in the minds of most present-day Westerners. It is also one of the best preserved—and, from its convenient location near Mono Lake on the Los Angeles-Reno highway, one of the most visited. But the name alone is enough to assure its memory. Could any word, spoken with a deep-throated growl, sound more formidable than "Bodie"?

According to legend, Bodie owes its discovery to a wounded rabbit and its name to a signpainter's mistake. In 1858 Waterman "Bill" Body, an adventurous Dutchman from New York state, crossed the Sierras from the Mother Lode to reach a new strike at Monoville, a now-forgotten camp near the southern shore of Mono Lake. The following July, while riding past the site of Bodie, he shot and wounded a rabbit. In trying to dig it out of a hole, he discovered something else—gold.

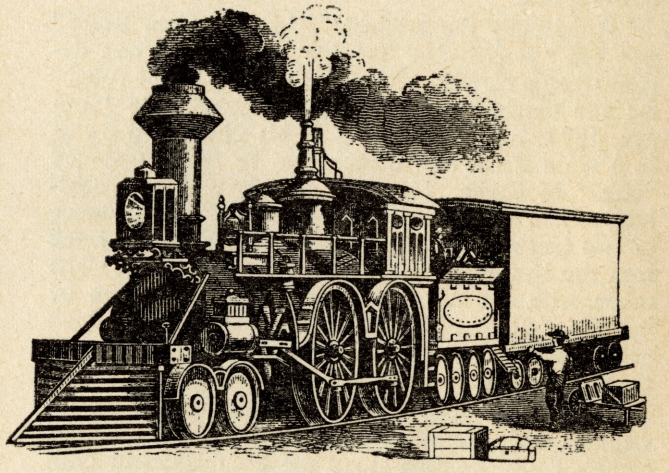
Body never lived to reap the rewards, for he died in a snowstorm while trying to reach his cabin a few months later. But his discovery sparked a mining boom in the Mono country. In August, 1860, the rousing town of Aurora was founded across the border in Nevada. Here it was that a painter is said to have changed Body's name in putting up the sign, "Bodie Public Stables." At any rate, Bodie it has been since the early 1860s.

But while Aurora burned brightly during the Civil War, Bodie slumbered. In 1864 one visitor found less than twenty frame and adobe houses in town. Then in the middle '70s two partners paid $950 for what came to be known as the Standard Mine. They barely grubbed out an existence until another accident gave Bodie its tumultuous rebirth. A sudden cave-in exposed a fabulous ore body. The pair took out $37,000 in gold and silver before they sold the mine in 1876 for $65,000.

Meanwhile, the nearby Bodie Mine was languishing—its stock passing at 25 cents a share. Unknown to the owners, the miners had discovered a new vein which sky-rocketed its real value. Mysteriously, Bodie Mine stock began to rise. Before its original promoters could buy it back, it had soared to $55 per share. Miners who had taken it in lieu of wages had earned $880 a day; a Chinese launderer came off with $55 for cleaning a shirt. In a month, Bodie yielded $600,000 in ore.

This news shook the West like an alarm bell in the fall of 1877. Miners who had stampeded to every strike from the Mother Lode to Pikes Peak now turned their feet toward Bodie. By February, 1878, the new camp was so overrun that one arrival wrote of the difficulty in finding "even a place to spread one's blankets." Chilling winds, snowstorms and 9000 feet altitude made Bodie a miserable place.

But on they came. By the end of the '78 rush, Bodie had over a hundred buildings of familiar false fronts and wooden awnings, and some three thousand heavy booted, wide-hatted adventurers. Through



her bustling streets moved horsemen and pack burros; twenty mule freight wagons from as far as Mojave on the Southern Pacific Railroad and Wadsworth on the Central Pacific; and daily and weekly stagecoaches from Carson City, Sonora, Mammoth City and Owens Valley.

In its heyday between 1878 and 1881, Bodie ran full blast round the clock, both above and below ground. Underneath, in the shafts of the Standard, the Bodie, and nearly thirty other mines on the side of famed Bodie Bluff, a total of $25,000,000 was being recovered in gold and silver ore. On top, fortunes were also passing across the bars and gaming tables of the hell-roaring Bonanza, Rifle Club, Champion, and the dozen or so other saloons which graced the main street. At its height Bodie boasted two banks, three breweries, half-a-dozen hotels, a sizeable red light district, four daily newspapers, a well-populated Boot Hill, a volunteer fire brigade, and what was claimed as the West's biggest Chinatown after San Francisco's. The boys liked to insist that Bodie had "the widest streets of any Western mining town, the wickedest men, and the worst climate out-of-doors."

From the beginning of its big revival, Bodie was tough and proud of it. One of the earliest and most popular sports was claim-jumping. In May, 1878, the superintendent of the Standard Mine discovered

a crew of government surveyors running lines on the property for a rival claimant. After a short parley, during which the mine boss was backed by an armed posse, the surveyors saw the point and withdrew.

Matters were not always settled this easily. In August, 1879, the adjacent Owyhee and Jupiter Mines hired professional gunmen and joined battle in earnest. From two makeshift forts the rival corps carried on an exchange of fire for two days. Then the Jupiter forces tried strategy. One group jumped into the open to draw Owyhee fire while another gained a commanding position on higher ground. With bullets coming through their roof, the Owyhees managed to hold out until several hundred armed members of the Bodie Miners Union marched up and halted the fight. Each side had lost one man, but it was the Jupiter superintendent and five of his men who were arrested. Their sentence by a vigilante court: twenty-four hours to get out of town. It is said that the Jupiter boss swaggered around Bodie insulting various citizens until the last hour, then jumped in a buggy and wheeled out of town at top speed.

Apparently the original "Bad man from Bodie" was one "Rough and Tumble Jack," who was described by a Nevada newspaper as "one of the roughest and toughest customers ever known." In January, 1878, he was boasting of his physical prowess in a main street bar, claiming to be the undisputed "chief" of Bodie. He went outside with one challenger, and the two coolly drew guns at a distance of two feet and unloaded them at each other. Back into the bar reeled Rough and Tumble Jack. The other, with one arm shattered, reloaded his gun by holding it between his knees. A moment later Jack got a second dose which proved sufficient to end the career of Bodie's first bad man.

After that shootings—usually unpunished—were weekly and sometimes daily occurrences. The camp's better citizens stood the bombardment until New Year's Eve, 1879, when one celebrant objected to another dancing with his wife, and got a fatal bullet for his effort. This was too much, even for Bodie. A vigilance committee took the culprit from his jail cell, hustled him down Bodie's main street to the scene of the crime, and hung him on a makeshift gallows. The one voice raised against the affair was that of a former Attorney General of Nevada. He took the hint and rode out of town, however, after one of the vigilantes cried, "Get a rope and we'll hang you!"

Not that Bodie meant to flout the law. A hearing was held on the lynching—with the jury including the leader of the vigilantes and the one who had applied the noose! As for the original shooting: "Case dismissed, as the defendant was taken out and hanged by a mob."

Bodie's one lynching had no noticeable effect on its bad men. In fact, they soon turned their attention to the Concord stages which rocked out of town every day groaning with gold and silver bullion. The cliff-lined canyon through which it passed between Bodie and Aurora was made to order for banditry. During 1880 enterprising road agents stopped the Bodie stage no less than six times. On two days they robbed the upstage, then waited for the downstage and robbed it.

Wells Fargo Express was getting its fill. It soon began putting on two or more guards when a heavy consignment was shipped, transferring stage passengers to a light wagon which followed at a safe distance through the canyon. Before the last double holdup the company brought in its crack shotgun messenger, Mike Tovey—a Canadian who was shy of manner but not of nerve. On the afternoon of September 5, while Bodie still buzzed with news of the morning holdup, Tovey and a second guard rode the downstage while the passenger wagon brought up the rear. Near the scene of the first robbery, Tovey got out and walked ahead. Undaunted by this precaution, two robbers fired a volley at Tovey. He then retreated to the stage and cut loose at the advancing enemy with a shotgun. One was killed outright and the other was frightened away. But while Tovey went to a nearby house to get a wounded arm dressed, the surviving robber came back and rode off with Wells Fargo's treasure chest.

Successes of the road agents failed to make a dent in Bodie's high prosperity. No extravagance was too great, no celebration too extreme, for this riotous camp. In 1879 someone remembered that old Bill Body's remains lay down the canyon in an unmarked grave. "Poor old Body!" said the boys. Nothing was too good for the town's noble founder! A search was launched forthwith, and his bones were brought back in triumph. For days they were on public exhibit, subject to handling and close scrutiny by every civic-minded citizen. On November 1, 1879, amidst much speech-making (and doubtless elbow-bending) Bill Body's bones were laid to rest in Boot Hill.

What, then, of a suitable monument to Bodie's founder? For months the camp waited while an elaborate headstone was ordered and hauled in by twenty-mule team. But when it arrived the month was September, 1881, and Bodie was stunned by news of President Garfield's death by assassination. Nothing was too good for the nation's martyred President! The monument was erected as a memorial, and Bill Body's bones remained in a transplanted, but still forgotten grave. Bodie's heart was big, but it was not always constant.

Meanwhile, boisterous Bodie was about to gain the ultimate feature of all top-notch mining camps —a railroad. Since 1880 the narrow-gauge Carson and Colorado, a branch of the Virginia and Truckee, had been inching southward across Nevada sands. In its march toward California's Owens Valley it would come no nearer to Bodie than some forty miles. This plan was hardly acceptable in that proud camp. Accordingly another branch was begun in the spring of 1881 to connect Bodie with Benton, a mining town situated next to the Carson and Colorado route. Practical purpose of the road was to supply Bodie's deep-growing mines with timbers from fresh forests south of Mono Lake. But its name was the Bodie and Benton, and the owners also aimed to make rail connection with the outside world.

When the boys found that Chinese laborers were being imported for the work, their enthusiasm suddenly dimmed. Since the 1850s, intolerance of Chinese had been rife on the Coast, particularly since they were a source of cheap labor. At a rousing meeting in the Miners Union Hall, the boys resolved to carry out the popular slogan, "the Chinese must go!" A rough and not altogether sober mob, traveling by wagon, horseback, and foot, moved toward the work camp east of Mono Lake.

But messengers for the railroad had ridden ahead with the warning. Immediately the Chinese were placed in boats and carried to an island in the middle of Mono Lake. When the Bodie bad men arrived, they found the camp deserted and their intended victims protected by several miles of inhospitable brine. The unholy crusade thereupon collapsed. For the next full day the ragged army was dragging back into town, somewhat sobered after a forty-mile round trip. Thereafter the Mono fiasco was a moot subject in Bodie.

As for the railroad, its Chinese workmen went back on the job undisturbed. By November, 1881, they completed 31½ miles to the Mono timber stands, which is as far as the road ever got. Over its rugged grades, sometimes as steep as six percent, soon chugged a quartet of quaint little engines with quaint little names—"Mono," "Inyo," "Yolo," and "Como."

Bodie had its railroad, but its halcyon days were numbered. When a rumor reached the Mono County Supervisors that Bodie's mines might falter, they promptly decided that there was no time to lose in building the new courthouse at Bridgeport, the county seat. With a stiff six-and-a-half percent tax levied on all property (chief of which was Bodie's Standard Mine), they erected the new building in 1881. The elegant Victorian structure, carefully maintained for seventy years, stands today as probably the most picturesque county courthouse in California—a monument to the Standard Mine.

By 1882 Bodie's noontide had passed, and the boys were soon deserting her for new silver strikes in Arizona and Colorado. After Bodie mining stocks crashed the following year, the town faded fast. The Standard was merged with the Bodie in 1887 and continued to run intermittently, but the truth was that the camp's underground treasure was largely exhausted. It was the old familiar saga—a rich strike, an uproarious stampede, an hour of frenzied triumph, and afterward the shell of a town standing in solitary, ghostly silence.

One man who would not believe that the camp was dead was Jim Cain, an original arrival of the late '70s. Living in Bodie with his family, he gradually bought up the mines and buildings until he virtually owned the town. For years he opened the Bank of Bodie every day at 10 a.m.—when the only possible customers were the ground squirrels which scampered across the grass on the main street. When surfaced highways brought Bodie within the reach of motorists in the 1920s, old Jim Cain showed off his ghost town to wondering tourists, always assuring them that Bodie would come back.

Until 1932, when a fire swept away two-thirds of the business district, this was probably the best preserved ghost town in the far West. Enough buildings remain, including the Miners Union Hall, the Protestant Church, the Fire House, and several saloons, to make Bodie well worth the thirteen-mile side trip from the highway. Even Jim Cain is gone, though mining and rumors of mining still persist at Bodie. But from her warped board walks to her sagging false fronts, Bodie keeps to the last her reckless and truculent air.

OLD CALICO

Model Ghost Town

AT LEAST ONE desert camp—Calico—is apt to be more famous as a ghost than it ever was in real life. For Russell Knott, of Knott's Berry Farm, champion collector of Californiana, has added Calico to his treasury of keepsakes. Now being restored to original form, it is becoming California's ghost town de luxe.

But not even Russell Knott can bring back the wild pulse of this booming silver camp of the 1880s, which perched itself on the edge of the Calico Mountains a few miles northwest of the present Barstow. For a few tempestuous years it was the biggest mining bonanza in California.

Calico first leaped onto the California stage in 1881—just in time to take up where the fading camp of Bodie left off. Two prospectors first located the famed Silver King mine in April, but the ore was mediocre. Then in June a third miner associated with the others climbed to the top of the ledge, stuck his knife into the ore, and found it was like "cutting into a lead bullet." Feverishly he scrambled down and raced back to camp.

"Look here," he shouted to his partner, "pure horn silver!"

Soon Silver King ore was in a San Francisco smelter, where it returned a value of $400 to $500 per ton. Later shipments included chunks of pure silver the size of two fists. When this news struck the California mining world, the stampede was on. Busy gateway to the mines was San Bernardino, where as one observer put it, "everybody in town was carrying specimens in his pockets."

"The road from this town to the mine is alive with men and teams," he added. "There is now more travel through the Cajon than ever before."

TOWN SITE. On a narrow shelf of land below the King mine sprang the new town, which at first consisted of two stores, one boarding house, two assay offices, and the remarkable combination of boot and shoe shop with adjoining bar. But within a year the camp was bursting with 2000 men and a long, single street lined with canvas and adobe buildings—the latter wearing the characteristic pink hue of the Calico hills.

In the rugged canyons behind the town appeared new mines of picturesque names—Dragon, Snow Bird, Four Aces, Burning Moscow and Jersey Lily (named for the currently-popular Lily Langtry). From these mines a line of twenty-mule teams hauled ore through the streets of Calico on their way to the nearby mill at Oro Grande, an earlier mining camp located on the Mojave River.

Arriving miners took up residence in caves and half-tents above town; but those who came in style could put up at Jordan's Hotel, advertised as a "new adobe" charging $2.00 a day American Plan, situated where patrons "can be out of the noise of

saloons." In those first flush days Calico's optimism had no limits. One newcomer recalled that judging by talk in the restaurants, "half the diners were wealthy men to whom a few thousands of dollars were a mere bagatelle. While we ate, mills and roads were planned, railroads laid out and new camps started as though such things were mere incidents of the day's work."

Calico was clearly named for the hills at its back; their kaleidoscopic hues of green and rose had already earned the name of "Calico Mountains." But at least one version of the town's christening deserves repeating. A notable "man about town in Calico" was Joe Joiner, whose outstanding attire included a swallow-tail coat and a beard which hung to his knees. When "Buena Vista" or some other fine-sounding Spanish name was suggested, Joe rebelled.

"It ain't gonna be no Boona Vista, nor nothin' o' the sort!" he snorted. "Look at the colors in them rocks! I say call her Calico!"

Joe may have named the town, but his fun-loving neighbors had the last word. They were especially attracted to those magnificent whiskers, which were said to be such an "awful nuisance" when the wind blew that Joe wore 'em in braids or stuffed 'em in his trousers. One night Joe lingered too long at the brass rail and on his way home, fell asleep in the main street. As one of the Calico muleskinners described it, Joe Joiner awoke next morning to find that the boys had cut off "the haw side of his beard" and the "gee-tail of his coat"—a humiliation which thereafter kept the "man about town" off the camp's main street.

But Calico had an ample supply of characters. One of the first was irrepressible John Overshiner, who came up from San Diego to found the town's newspaper. Its name, the Calico *Print,* was as inspired as that of another mining camp newspaper, the Tombstone *Epitaph.* In fact, when the *Epitaph* commented that the Calico *Print* smacked of petticoats, Overshiner was equal to the challenge: "It overshines a graveyard inscription, anyhow."

Another prize Calico native was Bill Harpold, who kept an abominable hotel known as the Hyena House, which consisted of barrel staves on the outside and holes-in-the-rocks on the inside. When the Calico stage rolled in, Bill was on hand with a wheelbarrow and the commanding yell: "Here y'are, gentlemen! Right this way for Hyena House, best hotel in all Calico!" Bill's breakfasts were simple and straightforward: chili beans and whisky. When Hyena House caved in after a storm, Bill was unconcerned as he dragged out his two guests. He was sorry, he said, for the leaky roof.

Dog Days. Calico's best loved character was Dorsey, a black and white shepherd which earned fame as the only four-legged mail carrier in the United States. For three years Dorsey delivered Uncle Sam's cargo from Calico to the nearby Bismarck mines. He was usually a playful dog, but once the mail sacks were on his back Dorsey was strictly business. Touching him was considered tampering with the U.S. mails. Dorsey's master, a Bismarck miner, once refused a $500 offer with the reply, "I'd sooner sell a grandson."

Tradition has it that Calico was never a tough town, and the story goes that there was only one killing in the first two years. Editor Overshiner insisted that "there are no more orderly and law abiding people living anywhere than in Calico."

If so, Calico had a powerful lot of bad luck. It was probably the only mining town in California where the brothels were in the middle of the business district, rather than on the outskirts. They were undisturbed until they started robbing the patrons, one of whom was bold enough to protest and bring down the full force of the law.

And was Calico particularly gun shy? Early in 1885 a dispute arose over the famous Occidental Mine, which was so rich that ore under $100 per ton was thrown away. Opposing sides, armed with rifles and shotguns, squared off for a battle royal. At the last moment the deputy sheriff arrived and won a grudging agreement to settle the case in court.

Ordinarily, law and order was less triumphant. Whenever things got especially dull in Calico—which was seldom—the town roughs marched over to the east end and raided Chinatown. Life was hectic for Calico's Oriental population until the year the Chinese decided to fight back. At the next invasion, they counterattacked with laundry paddles and hot irons, forcing the raiders into ignominious retreat. Thereafter, Chinatown was unmolested.

But Calico's roughs had plenty of diversion. Their idea of an April Fool's joke was to stuff a dummy and then shoot it full of holes in a mock battle on Main Street. The "shooting spirit" fairly penetrated the Calico community. In the mid-Eighties its residents seized a sudden fad for fencing vacant lots. One stranger came upon some young boys driving stakes and stretching wire near the edge of town, and asked what they were doing.

"Fencing in a lot," was the stout answer.

"But you boys are not of age and you can't hold any real estate."

"You bet we can," retorted one. "If anybody tries to jump my lot, I'll shoot him!"

Refinements. By 1885 Calico began to look almost civilized. It had a schoolhouse, church services, temperance lectures, a literary society, even a dancing school. The social triumph of the year came

on May 1, when the Calico ladies held their "May Day Ball and Ice Cream and Strawberry Festival" in the town hall. Gay events included a maypole dance, crowning of a queen of the May and other good fun until two in the morning. At that time James Patterson, superintendent of the Occidental Mine, was called outside. He and two friends appeared on the front steps to be greeted by a shower of raw eggs, with maybe a brickbat thrown in. Some uninvited guests from a rival mine were expressing their disappointment, Calico style.

This naturally called for war. Patterson and friends drew their guns and fired away. The attackers retreated—except one, who dashed up the steps and ran right through the May Day Ball and Ice Cream and Strawberry Festival. Right behind him sprinted an Occidental man, shooting at his quarry while the party was thrown into panic and several women fainted. Nobody was hurt, but by the time the deputy sheriff arrived, the festival was over. Most of Calico thought that this was going a mite too far. Growled the Calico *Print*: "a disgraceful and outrageous assault." It might have passed on the Fourth of July, but on May Day—!

THE QUIET LIFE. Calico might not be quite tamed, but it did have its milder parties. A few weeks later the town society turned out for a moonlight dance and picnic at Hawley's Station, seven miles from camp. Buckboards, buggies and spring wagons paraded out of town to the accompaniment of the Calico brass band. The girls brought the picnic supper, and as the *Print* described it, "the boys were armed against snakes (in pint size bottles)." All went well until the ride home, when manly pride called for a wagon race. At this point one hero plunged ahead, his wheels bouncing from one boulder to the next. "He did not seem to care," reported the *Print,* "whether he was in the road or on the side of the mountain, his only ambition being to go, and go fast." This performance continued until his lady went crashing out of the wagon—after which reason prevailed again on the road to Calico. Yes, the old camp had its mild moments.

Calico had already had a new spurt to its boom when the Iron Horse came by its front door. As the Santa Fe Railroad reached across Arizona to the California border, the Southern Pacific moved to block entry. It started a new line from Mojave to Needles on the Colorado River, and the construction train passed a few miles south of Calico by mid-1882. To the camp this meant a sizeable drop in shipping costs, and the mines were soon disgorging lower-grade ores that were previously ignored. At the nearest point on the railroad grew the town of Daggett, bustling depot for Calico. For years Daggett, its streets filled with twenty-mule teams, was the busiest and toughest whistle stop on the Mojave Desert. Crowded with gamblers and bunco artists, it was modestly called "the worst place between Mojave and New York." Meanwhile, the stampede to Calico was renewed—this time by rail.

"Every day people were arriving on the trains from both east and west," wrote one visitor; "others came along via the ties; and across the desert from Cajon Pass straggled a long procession. . . . Some were in wagons with their scant household goods, and others on foot, unencumbered by any earthly possession beyond blankets and canteens."

From Daggett, train passengers were whisked onward by the Calico Stage Line, which advertised "a new, Light-running, Easy-riding Concord Coach." It also gave special assurance to the timid: "Children and nervous persons taken forcibly and effectually."

NEW WEALTH. Calico was still flush with silver when a new kind of boom struck camp. Borax had been found in the Calico Mountains as early as 1883, but it was several years later that huge ledges of a more valuable product—calcium borate—were discovered in the hills just east of Calico town. At first the camp was unaware of the true worth of the strike. Some specimens were sent to a San Francisco assayer, who contacted William T. Coleman, leader of the city's vigilante movement in the Fifties and currently a borax producer in Death Valley. Coleman sent an agent to Calico and bought up a fabulous array of claims for the bargain price of $20,000. Together with his partner, F. M. "Borax" Smith, he built a refinery near Daggett and began turning out the new product under the name of Colemanite. By 1898 a railroad was built between Daggett and Calico to tap the Colemanite deposits, and the camp eventully turned out almost as much wealth in borax as it did in silver.

Through the 1890s, however, Calico went into its silver decline. By the turn of the century the price of silver had dropped from $1.31 to 63 cents, and Calico's great days were over. Today it enjoys a third boom in the tourist business—but it's a mining town without mines, without miners and without May Day Balls that turn into shooting scrapes.

JULIAN CITY

South and Bonanza

EARLY-DAY CALIFORNIA had hundreds of rancho grants and hundreds of gold mines, but the two claims clashed at only two points. One was on General Fremont's Mariposa Rancho, near Yosemite. The other was at San Diego County's one mining bonanza, Julian City.

San Diego in 1870 was a town with a magnificent harbor, a delightful climate and little else. California's earliest settlement, it had watched with envy the spectacular rise of Northern California cities during the Gold Rush. Through the 1860s its only source of trade had been the remote Arizona settlements.

Then in 1867 Alonzo Horton arrived and took charge. Near the old San Diego community clustering beneath the mission, he subdivided an entirely new town, and placed San Diego on the high tide of a Southern California boom. At the same time, San Diego's hopes for a transcontinental rail connection were boosted when the Texas Pacific bill went before Congress. To the assets of "Bay n'

Climate," San Diego could add at least one more—optimism.

Meanwhile, placer mining on a small scale had been started in the late 1850s high in the San Diego Mountains, west of the old Santa Ysabel chapel. Around 1866 a mine at historic San Pasqual began yielding gold ore worth $33 per ton. In January, 1869, the first trace of gold was discovered on the ranch lands of Mike Julian, a former San Diegan. This activity was not lost on San Diego newspaper editors, who claimed that golden treasure in the mountains behind the city only waited exploration.

This was the situation early in 1870, when several prospecting parties were combing the San Diego Mountains. On February 20 a party including N. C. Bickers was camped on the Julian lands. Since this was Sunday, they were taking their leisure. Bickers was returning to camp from a walk when he accidentally kicked over a piece of quartz. According to miner's habit he picked it up, and saw specks of free gold. Excitedly he raced back to his friends, but the consensus was that nothing could be done about it on the Sabbath. One disciplinarian even refused to look at the rock on Sunday.

GOLD! But next day, in the teeth of a rainstorm, the prospectors descended on Bickers' discovery. On Tuesday, February 22, they took out half a ton of the rich ore. Convinced that they had a mine, they consulted their calendar and christened it the George Washington.

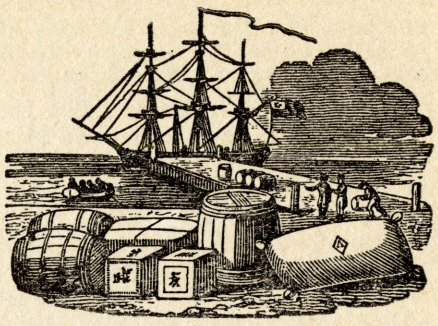
At first the miners of the Julian country tried to keep the secret. The new owners of the Cuyamaca Rancho, lying to the South, were trying to confirm their boundaries with a survey. If they heard of the gold discovery, they might try to "float" their grant northward to include the mines.

But one miner broadcast the story. The Julian men held a meeting to decide their course. They first went to the Cuyamaca surveyor and asked him where he was finding the boundary. He was noncommittal. Then, since the news was out, they decided to make the most of it. Down to San Diego went Bickers and a companion, carrying nearly a ton of rock samples. Part of it was left in a San Diego show window, and the rest shipped to San Francisco for refining.

Within minutes the streets of San Diego fairly hummed. Reported the San Diego *Bulletin*: "The news flew like wildfire, and soon the whole town was agog to learn the particulars." Quick estimates put the value of the ore between $50 and $10,000 to the ton. At this, many San Diegans struck out at once, pausing only long enough to get provisions, tools and directions.

In San Francisco the excitement was almost as intense. Results of the ore tests showed values from $75 to $200 per ton. The *Alta Californian,* usually conservative where mining discoveries were concerned, published a glowing letter from a gold-struck San Diegan. That was enough. On only twelve hours' notice, the steamer *Oriflamme* churned out of the Golden Gate jammed to the rails with 150 Argonauts. At San Diego most of them stopped long enough to inquire the route to the diggings.

THE RUSH. This was the Julian rush, California's big mining excitement of 1870. From Northern California the gold-hunters came by sea. From the Southland, they converged along roads through Los Angeles and San Bernardino. San Diego, convinced



at last that gold prosperity had reached its door, prepared to harvest the mining trade. It started a line of stages to the mines via Poway and Ramona (fare, $8), and began building a new road to shorten the distance to 44 miles. Los Angeles, sending freight teams and stages to the diggings, loomed as a competitor.

"There will be an immense crowd of gold seekers," the Los Angeles *News* told its readers. "They must naturally be skinned. Fellow citizens, let us prepare to do the skinning."

Rivalry was intense, but San Diego had the geographic advantage. For the next few months its streets were alive with freight wagons, prospecting parties and "quartz talk."

Center of excitement, however, was the Julian mines. Within days of the George Washington strike, a town named after Mike Julian was laid out, and lots were selling at from $50 to $180 apiece. By mid-March, 800 gold seekers were on the ground. Wrote one:

"The people here are positively wild. Such a thing as a sober thought is unknown. The rumor comes that Tom, Dick, or Harry has 'struck it' and forthwith the whole camp rushes pell mell for the 'new diggin's.' People don't sleep here at all (or if they do they are more lucky than I). All night long the ferocious prospectors make the hills resound with their stories of the day's adventures. Talk of Babel!"

At first, Julian was a tent city, with a handful of log cabins. Then, as lumber arrived by mule team from San Diego, frame buildings rose along the main street. Two stamp mills were under construction, preparing to work rich ores from such mines as the Washington, Golden Chariot, Ready Relief, Stonewall and—of all names—Lady's Leg.

But this booming camp had its troubles. Rains and chilling weather made life miserable for the treasure-hunters, most of whom slept on the ground and cooked by campfire. The first April wind blew every tent and knocked over the general store. "Gunn's express matter," reported one resident, "was distributed among the hills and gulches gratis."

Then there were the bad men. By June, 1870, Julian City had two shooting scrapes and a Vigilance Court. An *hombre* named Trask shot a Chinese citizen for pure entertainment, and then had to ride for the brush under a hail of bullets from Julian's outraged population.

Late in April the Julianites began to notice an unusual amount of missing horses. One Bob Crawford, whose reputation as a horse thief had accom-

panied him from Montana, was discovered with a stolen saddle. The miners formed a Vigilance Committee, took Crawford to the nearest tree and hoisted him up to a limb "once or twice." Under this gentle persuasion he confessed to stealing both saddle and horses, and was promptly banished from camp. Before it adjourned, the committee passed a resolution promising "to hang the first man who shall commit a murder here." The threat was not invoked until 1874, when an Indian was hanged for attacking a woman near Julian.

Still, Julian City was not a lawless town. Its greatest test came when a few landowners tried to jump the whole mining district. There was talk of gunplay, but the Julian men chose to fight it out in the courts.

APPEAL. The Cuyamaca Rancho, one of the last Mexican grants in California, had been given in 1845 to Augustin Olvera, the Spanish pioneer for whom Olvera Street in Los Angeles is named. In the early 1850s a U.S. Land Commission took up the task of settling all California property titles. It rejected Olvera's claim, for the understandable reason that he submitted no map, no boundary description and no clue to show where in San Diego County his rancho existed.

Olvera then appealed, and won the second round in the Southern California District Court. The government next appealed the case to Washington, but failed to press the suit until it was too late. In the 1860s drought and poor markets forced most Southern California ranchos into the hands of mortgageholders, and Cuyamaca was no exception. The new owners got the title suit dismissed and asked for an official boundary survey of their property.

It was in the midst of this survey that the Julian gold strike was made. True to the miners' fears, the Cuyamaca people moved in. Within a few weeks of the discovery, two of them appeared in Julian and announced that the mines were on Cuyamaca land. They were willing to let the men continue exploration, and if the mines proved permanent they would settle for a royalty on all ores.

This demand threw the hustling camp into sudden paralysis. Work on the main stamp mill was halted; word was dispatched to San Francisco to stop delivery of the machinery. The men left their mines, called a meeting in Julian and sent a delegation to the Cuyamaca people asking the terms. They got them: royalty figures which left the miners less than half the returns after paying milling costs on the ore.

As one man put it, this amounted to a "prohibition." The miners resolved to fight, and at another mass meeting attended by more than 500, picked a delegation to seek help in San Diego.

MASS MEETING. Incensed at this threat to its new mining trade, the harbor city responded with a huge meeting of its own on May 28, 1870. For the first time San Diegans heard details of the conflict. They learned that the Cuyamaca people had presented a letter supposedly written in 1846 by General Ortega, then owner of the neighboring Santa Ysabel Rancho, saying that his property was bounded on the south by the Cuyamaca. This evidence was too little and too late, said one aroused speaker.

"But if the Ortega letter is to guide the surveyor," he concluded, "and the Santa Ysabel Rancho forms one of the boundaries of the Grant, then the mines will be gobbled up by the land-sharks. . . ."

San Diego promised to help, but another setback came when the surveyors reported in favor of the Cuyamaca claim. The miners, fired for battle, took the case to court. For years they held their stand, financing the litigation through the yield from the mines. Still, the steam had been knocked out of the Julian stampede. In 1873 the town made a strong bid for the county seat, but its population probably never exceeded a thousand. When the Tombstone excitement flared in the late Seventies, most of Julian's remaining population packed off for Arizona. By 1887 it was a quiet village of two stores and a tri-weekly mail.

Then the few miners who had remained won their reward. The boundary case was settled, and the northern Cuyamaca line was established seven miles south of Julian City. The town, together with its neighboring community of Banner, gained new life. By 1890 four quartz mills were running and a fifth was under construction. Six years later there were a thousand men in the district and Julian City boasted hotels, churches and schools.

But by this time a new attraction had invaded the Julian country. The pleasant valley had become a stockman's range, supporting some 16,000 horses and cattle and about 10,000 sheep. Pioneer farmers arrived, and soon Julian became known for choice apples, pears and honey. Though its gold production reached an estimated total of $5,000,000, Julian is today a reformed mining camp with an agricultural basis—and a clear title. As for San Diego, it got its transcontinental railroad, its commerce and its population—but never another mining frenzy like Julian.

RANDSBURG

Gay 90's Stampede

EXCEPT IN COLORADO, the West's mining excitements seemed to have faded by the 1890s. In the California and Nevada deserts, exhaustion of underground treasure and the poor price of silver brought mining stagnation. To cap it all, a depression seized the nation in 1893 and made the Gay Nineties less than gay.

Then came Randsburg. Together with its neighbor camps springing up in the Mojave Desert, it broke the spell for California mining. Of the thousands who stampeded to the side of Rand Mountain, few made their fortune. But they had the time of their lives in California's one mining boom of the 1890s.

First strike of the new gold diggings came in 1893 at Goler, between Red Rock Canyon and Randsburg. This was enough to create a town, a stage line from Mojave and an eager population which prospected the nearby hills. Next year two miners found placer gold on the slope of Rand Mountain. One of them, Frederic M. Mooers, took two others back to the spot in the spring of 1895 to find the source of this surface color. Near the top of the mountain they broke a chunk off a rock outcropping and found it heavy with gold.

"Boys, we needn't look any further," shouted Mooers; "we've struck it rich."

The jubilant miners located their first claims on April 25, labeling them with the one name, Rand Mine—after the famous gold district opened a decade earlier in Transvaal, South Africa. When stock promoters began putting the Rand label on everything they sold, the name was changed to Yellow Aster—the big mine of Randsburg.

Meanwhile, the first rush for the Rand had begun. From Mojave to Panamint Valley, desert prospectors flocked to the new ground. But with a fortune under foot, Mooers and his partners were too broke to develop it. They almost sold half the mine to one newcomer, but soon the wife of one of them — a San Bernardino woman doctor named Rose Burcham—arrived to halt any talk of sale. Next, a mining expert showed up, examined the ground and clinched the case.

"Boys, you have a good thing," he told them solemnly. "Get a 100-stamp mill and shovel in the entire mountain, for it's all ore."

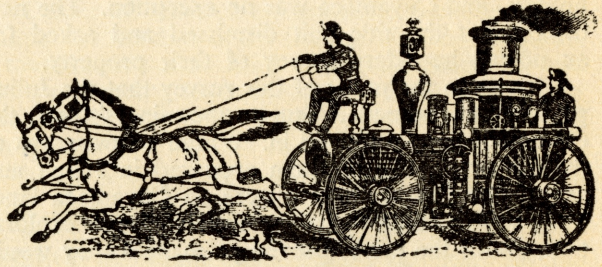
POOR MAN'S CAMP. Randsburg would eventually get its 100-stamp mill, making it one of the few mining booms to enrich the discoverers. From the beginning, in fact, this was a "poor man's camp." Locators of the Butte Mine were so destitute that they would have had to break camp the next day out of sheer hunger. As it was, they had to grind out enough gold dust from the first ore to raise the $1.60 fee for recording the claim.

For a full year the Randsburg boom was strictly local. Mojave prospectors continued to locate new mines, and to give them such picturesque names as Big Norse, King Solomon, Monkey Wrench, Minnehaha, Bully Boy, Napoleon and Gold Coin. By the end of 1895 the camp still contained only thirteen buildings—some of them part canvas.

But in the summer of '96, miner Si Drouillard found the St. Elmo Mine more than five miles east of the Rand Mine on the open desert. Added to the growing roster of rich lodes, it showed that the Rand deposits comprised "one of nature's great treasure houses." Randsburg's big rush was on.

From out of Southern California and Nevada came a horde of fortune-seekers in the fall of '96 and winter of '97. Randsburg mushroomed to some 300 buildings and tents, its population to some 2500 by early 1897—with forty or fifty more arriving every day. Through its surging streets walked Argonauts from as far off as Australia and South Africa. Under foot, they believed, was another Comstock Lode.

The Randsburg stampede converged along two general routes. From San Bernardino and points east, gold hunters took the Santa Fe Railroad through Barstow to the nearest station, Kramer. Over the last twenty-eight miles to Randsburg, three stages a day delivered Randsburg's population.



From Los Angeles the Argonauts rode the Southern Pacific to Mojave, then took one of the four daily stages for the mines. Just below Red Rock Canyon the coaches veered eastward through Garlock, adding an extra pair to the four-horse team for the sandy, uphill pull into Randsburg. Wrote one passenger:

"All along the road from Mojave to Randsburg we passed dozens of team and freighting wagons, some of the latter having sixteen horses; also three or four stages returning to Mojave, many private conveyances, burro prospecting outfits, and miners and tenderfeet, with packs on their backs, going on foot to the new El Dorado."

Another newscomer described his stagecoach companions: "miscellaneous load of capitalists, carpenters, prospectors, miners, drummers (traveling salesmen), fakers, newspaper correspondents, and perhaps a traveling company of barnstormers."

WELCOME, LADS! When the stageload rocked into camp, Randsburg's welcome was exuberant and typical. The whole population turned out to greet newcomers, and to line up at the post office for mail. In the crowd, according to one arrival, were "sturdy

Cornishmen from the mines, tramp-like prospectors from the hills and desert, keen dealers in mines that others have found, gamblers, actors, mule-punchers, and the general riff-raff that gathers whenever gold clinks and moral restraints are lax. The deputy sheriff is there," the eyewitness continues, "with a fierce black mustache, a slouchy sombrero, a long, black frock coat, high boots, and protruding pistol. There are women in the crowd, but the most prominent are not the most worthy."

Randsburg was rowdy, but not particularly lawless. By March of '97 it had witnessed three or four shooting scrapes. A band of toughs, proudly calling itself the "Dirty Dozen," tried to run things in true mining camp style. At this, peaceable Randsburgers formed a Citizens' Committee "to enforce the laws," and posted a pointed notice.

"Ten Deputy Constables have been appointed," it warned, "and any riotous and threatening conduct will be suppressed and punished."

The Dirty Dozen were properly cowed, and though Randsburg flourished in the farthest corner of huge Kern County, it shunned a tough reputation. Good clean fun, however, was something else again. Randsburg was quick to acquire a brass band, a volunteer fire company, an Orpheus Theater —and a full complement of saloons. In her streets, complete with boardwalks and false fronts in the best mining camp tradition, the entire population met every night in social confab. It was the custom for everyone, whether imbibing or not, to make the rounds of the bars and dance halls each evening and mix with the crowd.

With Randsburg it was anything for a joke or a celebration. Its riotous Fourths of July included sack races, grand balls—and dynamite salutes which rattled every building in camp. Once a stage driver, swinging an empty coach through town, turned too short at the end of the street and overturned the vehicle. When a wisecracking bystander bet him drinks for the crowd that he couldn't do it twice, the driver wheeled down the street and capsized his stage again. The boys were just as prompt to collect the bet.

By 1897 Randsburg mining was big business. The neighboring town of Johannesburg had been founded over the divide a mile away. The Yellow Aster Mine had yielded its owners $250,000 in ore, catapulting them from prospectors to mining magnates. Most of this had been hauled by twenty-mule team to the stamp mill at Garlock, but by '97 both Randsburg and "Joburg" had small mills of their own. The first of Randsburg's $8 million gold yield was on its way.

The booming camp was a magnet for every picturesque character who had haunted the mining camps for thirty years, and one of the first to arrive was the irrepressible Pat Reddy. A self-educated lawyer, Pat had won his spurs in the rough-and-tumble Nevada courts of the 1860s. With his brother Ned, who was to carry at least two notches on his gun, Pat had escaped from a shooting affray in Aurora which cost him an arm. For years he made his headquarters in Owens Valley, turning up at every new silver strike in the desert country and earning a reputation as one of California's most formidable criminal lawyers. What he lacked in legal knowledge he made up in sharp wit and a sharper tongue.

Big Man in Town. By the late Seventies Pat Reddy had become a state senator and a member of the California constitutional convention of '79. Still seeking a fortune, he rushed to every Western mining excitement from Bodie to the Coeur d'Alenes. When Randsburg made headlines, he hurried to the camp and tried to buy a share of the Yellow Aster. It is said that when Dr. Rose Burcham refused, he cussed out women in general all the way back to Mojave.

But Pat Reddy was not through. When the Yellow Aster people got into legal troubles he took the case, and wound up with a part interest for a fee. Before he died in 1900, Reddy had graduated from mining camp lawyer to bonanza king.

By 1897 Randsburg was rising to that upper class of mining camps gifted with a railroad. From the Santa Fe line at Kramer, tracklayers were spiksteel across the desert for the standard-gauge Randsburg Railroad. When the Iron Horse reached Rand Mountain, the giant ore bodies would find their proper market, and Randsburg its proper place as a second Comstock.

On December 23, 1897, the rail crews laid track over the hill into Johannesburg. This naturally called for a celebration, Randsburg style. That afternoon all of Joburg and half the population of Randsburg turned out to cheer the first Iron Horse. Finally the expected train chugged over the hill and stopped in the midst of the shouting crowd.

"The locomotive blew a long blast," described one eye-witness, "and everything that could make a noise chimed in."

But the Rand District had just begun to celebate. "Tonight," wrote a news correspondent, "the two towns of Randsburg and Johannesburg are painting things vermillion." It was an understatement. Just before midnight, in the midst of the carnival, fire broke out in a gasoline storehouse at Randsburg. The fire company swiftly arrived with its new "chemical engine." It was greeted by exploding drums of gas and oil which sent burning liquid to other buildings hundreds of feet away.

"The fire was a magnificent spectacle," said one gleeful celebrant. "The black smoke, intermingled with flame, rolled up hundreds of feet, to fall back in showers or sparks on the roofs of adjoining buildings. Each explosion of oil added to the terror of the situation, and red-hot drums flew through the air in all directions, but, miraculously, no one was killed."

Randsburg was equal to the moment. Despite explosions which knocked several men down, the Randsburgers joined their firemen in attacking the blaze. They blew up several structures in the path of the flames, and checked the fire before it had consumed more than three buildings. Randsburg went home, but it was not through celebrating. Next night the firemen held their Christmas Eve ball, with proceeds going to pay for the engine which had received a premature baptism of fire.

Fire! Fire! The fire boys, in fact, had only begun to fight. Less than a month later, in the early morning of January 19, flames broke out in the Mojave Saloon and spread rapidly up Rand Street. The close-packed wooden buildings kindled like tinder, and soon the town was spouting smoke 1000 feet high. The St. Elmo, main hotel in town, was consumed early, the guests escaping only with their clothes.

"Men, women and children filled the streets," recorded one citizen. "Everybody near the fire was intent on saving their houses or furniture."

The one hope of saving part of the town was to keep the flames from jumping Broadway. When the Broadway Hotel was threatened men climbed to the roofs of nearby buildings and tore loose burning boards with their bare hands. Two or three fell from exhaustion before the fire was controlled. But half of Randsburg lay in smoking cinder.

All of this was part of mining camp life, and Randsburg turned cheerfully to the job of rebuilding. Less than five months later another fire took care of the other half.

Yet it would take more than fires to down the Rand District. Randsburg's gold output had scarcely begun to fade when rich deposits of tungsten were found on Rand Mountain. The nearby town of Atolia was born, and the whole Rand District boomed again.

Then in 1919, discovery of the Big Silver Mine near Atolia gave the district its third mining excitement. Here was founded the silver town of Red Mountain, "where every night is Saturday night, and Saturday night is the Fourth of July." Randsburg and Joburg are quieter, but the old-timers will tell you they're just resting between booms.

DEATH VALLEY

The Tail End Ending

POPULATION FOR MOST of California has always zoomed steadily upward, but Death Valley's census reached its peak more than forty years ago. Between 1905 and '08, several thousand miners, promoters, gamblers, prostitutes, and other fragments of humanity poured into this "white heart of the Mojave" and then poured out again. Overnight were born the wild and raucous camps of Greenwater, Harrisburg, and—of all names—Skidoo. Then, as though blown by a hot desert wind, they faded—leaving nothing but great piles of tin cans and empty bottles.

This was the tail end of the West's last big gold rush. It started at the turn of the century, when the riotous Nevada towns of Tonopah and Goldfield aroused the mining world by producing a cool $250,000,000. It drew near to Death Valley when the Mojave Desert's greatest prospector, Shorty Harris, made his Bullfrog strike in August, 1904. On the barren hills just inside the Nevada border sprang Rhyolite, which brought seven thousand people and two railroads racing across the desert.

From Rhyolite the excitement leaped to California and the very rim of Death Valley. Arthur Kunze, a miner who had strayed south from Tonopah, had already found promising copper ore in the Funeral Mountains near the southern end of the valley. But Nevada was then wild over gold, and Death Valley was considered too remote to make a copper mine pay. Kunze and his partners spent two years trying to sell their claims. But by the spring of 1906 Rhyolite and its railroads brought the valley closer to civilization. Kunze sold out to various mining magnates, among them Charles M. Schwab, president of Bethlehem Steel.

In those days, the Schwab touch was all that was needed to launch a new stampede. And when Nevada heard that one of Kunze's partners had sold his share for $40,000 cash, the rush to Death Valley was on.

LAST CHANCE! Out of Goldfield stormed a host of men—by horseback, foot, and chugging auto. Over the last miles this motley crew came up a ravine so steep and gruelling in the desert sun that it earned the grim name of Dead Horse Canyon. Within a month a thousand adventurers were on the ground looking for copper—and excitement. In less than five months, claim stakes and rock monuments peppered the ridge of the Funerals for thirty miles.

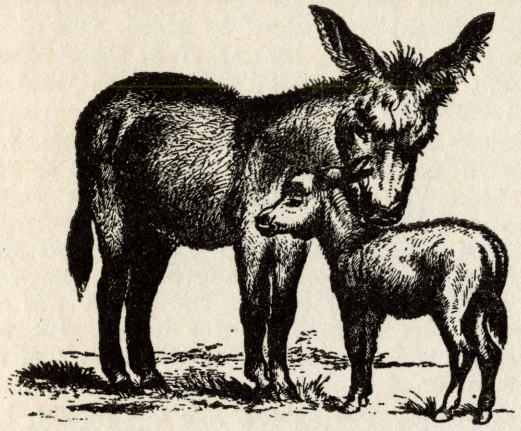
Thus was born Greenwater, farthest outpost of the desert mining frenzy in the 1900s. Her saga will forever serve to show what can be done by the combination of two ingredients—excitement and publicity. Before 1906 there was nothing on these brush-covered slopes but a dismal spring whose water was an unappetizing green. Within a year Greenwater had two thousand people, a $100,000 bank, two newspapers, a magazine glorying in the name of Death Valley *Chuckwalla,* and a boundless future. It was, claimed the boys, "the world's biggest copper deposit." When it attracted mining capital from Butte, Montana, the copper center of the world, they knew it would be "bigger than Butte."

This kind of city would certainly need room for growth. At first the camp lay in a ravine near the main claims, but this hardly afforded room for another Butte. So after Christmas of 1906 the whole camp pulled stakes and moved two miles to the new Greenwater, on a broad slope just east of Death Valley's rim. Over the rugged route marched a procession of miners and merchants, carrying their possessions with them and looking like refugees from a desert cloudburst. Along the road an enterprising barkeeper dropped his inventory and began catering to the parade. So did a Greenwater butcher. Pausing for a shot or a steak, the trekkers pushed on with new zest.

"Saloons and boarding-houses, stores and brokerage firms are doing business on the run," wrote one observer, "and trying to be on both sides of the mountain at the same time. . . . Those who remain in the old camp are walking two miles to the new to get their eggs for breakfast. Those who journeyed to the new are walking two miles to the old to get their mail. . . ."

ANTE UP! All this was a mere lark for wild and reckless Greenwater. Though technically out of bounds, it followed the wide open tradition of Nevada camps. Gambling was illegal in California, but at Greenwater faro, roulette and poker roared round the clock. So did the other customary mining camp vices.

MINER'S COURT. But while the copper camp had no peace officers during most of its career, it had a form of miner's justice. Greenwater could



tolerate a lot, but as in other desert camps, it was sometimes necessary for a citizens' committee to collar a particularly obstreperous character and hand him a canteen. This was a silent but effective invitation to start walking. When four robbers were caught in Greenwater they were ordered to be on the street at nine the next morning. At the appointed hour, Greenwater's entire body politic met them and served notice that they had half an hour to settle matters before their departure. One optimist asked for an hour, but was soon convinced that he could make it on time if he tried. Within the half hour the four outcasts and their canteens were heading toward Dead Horse Canyon.

Greenwater was stern, but it could also be sentimental—on occasion. When Billy, one of the town hangers-on, died in a bout with Demon Rum, Greenwater resolved to bury him in style. For the padding of the coffin one saloonkeeper offered the packing from a barrel of bottled beer. Another contributed some respectable street clothes for Billy's last public appearance. On the night before the service, the improvised mortuary was visited by the belle of the camp, Tiger Lil. She surveyed the undertaker's work and was especially pleased at the way he had placed Billy's right hand on the chest—"just the way he held a poker hand." Still, something was missing . . .

Next day Greenwater turned out in its best attire and followed the hearse over a bumpy half mile to the town cemetery. Tiger Lil rode beside the driver, taking a particular interest in the proceedings. A young man who had studied for the ministry performed the service, and his wife closed the ceremony by singing "Nearer My God to Thee."

Those who had seen the open coffin knew the secret: close to his vest Billy's fingers held a poker hand. The cards? Tiger Lil had sent him off in style with five aces.

GLORY PEAK. By mid 1907 Greenwater was on the crest of its boom. From the nearest railroad thirty-five miles away lurched one of the earliest auto stages in the West—the Death Valley Chug Line. The fearless driver on this hair-raising ride was Alkali Bill; according to the Greenwater *Times*, "he generally goes out empty and comes back loaded." Greenwater was, in fact, the first mining area in California reached by auto—and when you got there gasoline was a dollar a gallon.

Among the other luxuries in this parched country was water. Hauled in from wells thirty miles away, it sold as high as twelve cents a gallon retail. Mule teams freighting in water drank up half their cargo on route. With water this scarce, fire was the dread of Greenwater. When flames broke out in the office of the Greenwater *Miner*, its editors had to let it burn to the ground; water to put it out would have cost more than the plant was worth.

Meanwhile, other discoveries were contributing to Death Valley's big mining boom. In the summer of 1905 Shorty Harris left Rhyolite, the Nevada town sprung from his gold discovery. In a drunken spree he had sold his original Bullfrog claim for $900, and had promptly dissipated that as well—according to the custom of desert prospectors. Now he headed across Death Valley in search of a new strike.

On the way he met Pete Auguerreberry, another famed Death Valley prospector. What happened next is in dispute; each man claims he made the discovery. But one of them found an outcropping of high grade at what is now Harrisburg Flats, next to Emigrant Canyon.

"They beat me out of Bullfrog," shouted Shorty, "but now I'm going to show 'em."

"You take one side and I'll take the other," said Pete.

ALL PALS. So the two miners followed the outcrop up the mountainside, putting up locations for themselves and some friends. That night when they met other prospectors at Wildrose Springs, the secret was out. The rush came so fast it caught the discoverers by surprise. Pete Auguerreberry had to go down to Ballarat, an established gold camp in the south end of Panamint Valley. When he got back a few days later, the flats were overrun with gold-seekers; his own claim stakes had been pulled up and men were occupying the ground. Shorty Harris was also away, but Pete lost no time in identifying himself as French Pete, the discoverer.

"Before I would let anybody take it away from me," he boomed, "I would fight and either leave my bones or another man's on the ground."

His listeners pulled up their stakes and Pete put back his.

Harrisburg, as the camp came to be called, was never a big excitement. Its population got no further than three hundred. But it led to the discovery of the one Death Valley camp which paid for itself. In the rush to Harrisburg, two miners were going up Emigrant Canyon and got lost in a fog—one of the few recorded on the Mojave Desert. They strayed up the side of Tucki Mountain, north of Harrisburg Flats, and made the gold strike which founded the town of Skidoo.

One of them was Harry Ramsey, famous in the mining world as one who had grubstaked the discoverers of Goldfield. Ramsey and his partner now sold out to Bob Montgomery, who had owned the main mine in Rhyolite, for the tidy sum of $60,000. Then Charles M. Schwab invested some money in Montgomery's mine. When these big movements were broadcast, all roads led to Skidoo.

"Follow Schwab to Skidoo, the New Gold Camp

of 1907," advertised one mining stock company.

Winter and summer, the gold hunters trekked out of Rhyolite and across Death Valley. It was then that Stovepipe Wells sprang up as a stopping place on the weary route. In the summer of 1907, at least sixteen men died trying to cross the blistering valley on the way to Skidoo.

THE TOWN CHRISTENING. There are two versions on just how Skidoo got its wonderful name. One is that it was first discovered on the 23rd of the month—calling to someone's mind the popular remark which then covered any situation—"Twenty-three Skidoo" (meaning "beat it"). The other is that Bob Montgomery announced he would bring water into camp from Telescope Peak, twenty-three miles away—causing the same wisecrack.

In any case, Skidoo it was, and the new camp promptly gained a bank, a newspaper, a red light district, a row of saloons, seven hundred citizens, and a telephone line all the way across Death Valley to Rhyolite. Skidoo never acquired stage connections, either auto or horsepower. Located in the most inaccessible corner of California, it was doing well to ship paying ore.

But Skidoo did have something else on its neighbors—a lynching. Skidoovians, as they were called, were somewhat touchy about murder, there being no jail in camp. One rough character, a saloonkeeper named Joe Simpson, had recently shot up a hotel in Independence while on his way to Skidoo. In April, 1908, he went on a prolonged jag; running out of money, he decided to get it by the direct process of robbing the bank. But when he presented his gun at the teller's window, he was overpowered by several men and thrown out by the manager, Jim Arnold. Some time later Joe got another gun and went storming back into the bank.

"Have you got anything against me, Jim?" he demanded of the manager.

"No, Joe, I've got nothing against you."

"Yes, you have," Joe insisted dramatically, "your end has come—prepare to die."

He thereupon shot Arnold in the chest—a mortal wound. The constable came running up and wrestled with Simpson, who was wildly emptying his gun. He was placed under guard, but three days later the aroused Skidoovians took action. Overpowering the officer, they took Simpson and hanged him to a telephone pole. Skidoo was so excited that night over the big event—the first lynching in California mines for years—that one man claimed he was awakened and told the news twenty-three times. "I was surprised every time," he added. One of the town's ne'er do wells, hearing of it, skidooed out of camp. He was reported still running when he passed Stovepipe Wells next morning.

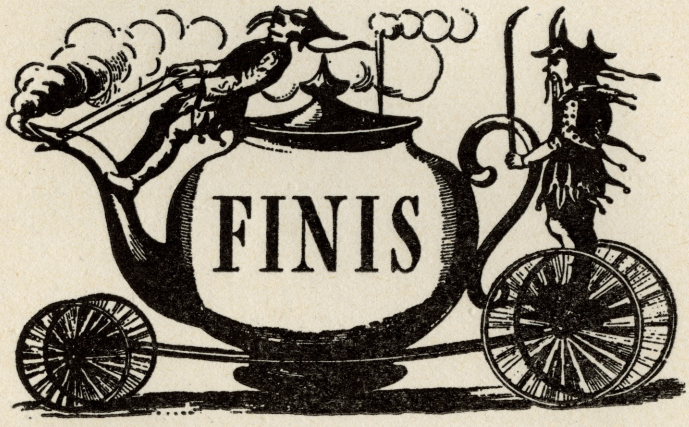
No one thought of punishing the lynchers. Said the coroner's jury, "he died by strangulation by persons unknown." Headlined the Skidoo *News*, "MURDERER LYNCHED WITH GENERAL APPROVAL." As for the rest of California, it sent out news photographers who reached remote Skidoo somewhat late. Joe was already buried. But Skidoo was not a town to hide its light under a bushel. Joe was obligingly dug up and rehung for the benefit of the press cameras.

LAST GASP. But Skidoo, like Greenwater, had already been waning fast since the panic of autumn, 1907. Investment money suddenly disappeared, and without more outside capital coming in, the Death Valley camps collapsed. Greenwater's death was abrupt and complete; her mines had run out of ore at two hundred feet. Practically the only shipments ever made were rock from the claim monuments—hauled away in the camp's dying hour.

This was the end of California's "second Butte." If you want to see the ghost of Greenwater, don't go to its site. The lumber from its shacks was hauled to the little Amargosa River town of Shoshone.

Skidoo was harder to kill. For another decade it continued to yield gold and silver ore—perhaps as much as $3,000,000. But when the pipeline to Telescope Peak was sold in World War I, Skidoo died of thirst. Little more than rubbish piles may now be seen by the motorist who turns off the pavement in Emigrant Canyon and takes the dirt road to Skidoo.

Death Valley mining flared again in 1926, when the quack promoter, C. C. Julian, founded the town of Leadfield, at the head of Titus Canyon. But Julian was even then under investigation by state officials. Like Greenwater before it, Leadfield mined more stockholder's pockets than mountains. If they yielded little ore, the Death Valley camps did produce California's last big mining excitement.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